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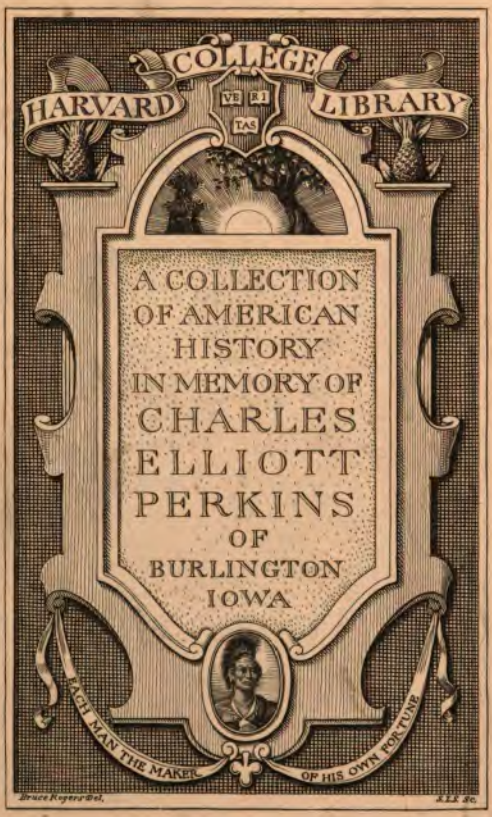

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IN THE OAK OPENINGS

BY

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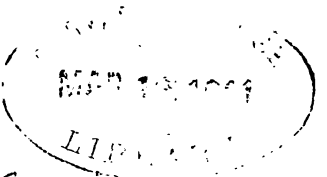

C. E. Perkins memorial

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TO HER

WHOSE TENDER AND CEASELESS DEVOTION HAS BEEN THE CHIEF SOLACE OF MY LIFE, PROVING "HOW MUCH THE WIFE IS DEARER THAN THE BRIDE," I WOULD FONDLY

Dedicate this my First Novel,

AS ALSO THE GRATEFUL WHISPERINGS OF MY LAST BREATH.

BENJ. F. TAYLOR.

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THEOPHILUS TRENT.

CHAPTER I.

A WESTERN SETTLEMENT AND A YOUNG ADVENTURER.

IT was late afternoon. A red September sun was just setting the Michigan woods afire. It had also kindled the two front windows of a neat log dwelling facing a little green with criss-crosses of wagon-tracks that everybody made at his own sweet will.

A log store with a bilious-looking sign over the battened door, an old potash-kettle careened beside it, flounces of gaudy, freckled calico draping the windows; a log smithy with its roof half slipped off behind and its wide mouth of an entrance, as if an ill-conditioned tramp of a house should sit down by the wayside to yawn; a squat log schoolhouse like a sitting hen staring back at the log dwelling with its shining eyes, — such was the picture.

Beyond the green a log road, called corduroy, skirted the marsh. A log horse-block stood in front of the store, and a log trough beside a well whose sweep, like a monstrous fish-pole, dangled a bucket instead of

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an angle-worm. Everything proved that logs were made before saw-mills. The discordant clang of bells in the woods foretold the coming of the cows for the evening milking, and the piping of the frogs proclaimed the coming of the night.

At this moment a span of ponies attached to a covered carriage of some pretension trotted out into the little opening. There was but one passenger, and he the driver, a weasel-bodied youth of perhaps nineteen, with a peaked face, a nose that Rome could n't claim and Greece would despise, — a sort of composite nose figuring among its kind like a Queen Anne house among dwellings. The young fellow's best feature was a pair of black eyes. He evidently knew but little about driving, for he held the lines in both hands and they diverged from the ponies' heads like a long leathern V. He was as evidently no Wolverine, and quite fresh from the East, or, indeed, from any cardinal point you might name. He knew some Greek and could croak like Homer's frogs, *brek-ek-ek-koax koax;* some Latin, from *Arma virumque cano* to the royal bill of fare, *Dido et dux;* had safely passed the *pons asinorum* and gone on to the regions beyond. In a word, he had taken the first two letters in the alphabet of college honors and was an A. B.

He had been a bookish, omnivorous boy, a miscellaneous devourer of all sorts of literature, from that with two *t*'s to that with only one. He had a good first name, Theophilus, and knew its derivation and meaning, and the shoemaker said " he was a scholard,

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and he 'd bet his last on it, in fact his awl;" and his family name was not a bad one, — Trent. Now Theophilus Trent, A. B., had come West by canal-boat, — a "liner" at that, — with a tremendous maw amidships, by a wheezy, stuffy old steamer, "The Nile," and then by wagon and moonlight through the Oak Openings of Michigan, the great orchards of the wilderness, — *oak*-apple, — bound for the village of Bodkins, a place at that time unnoted upon any map by as much as a fly-speck, — a place he never meant to go to, and yet a place where he found a lady who knew his mother and a minister who had known his father. He had come West to become president of a college or principal of a polytechnic institute. If a fellow aims at the moon he may extinguish an eye with the returning arrow, but, at least, he has not made a target of his toes. The college was not founded, the institute not located, and so he was now Principal — look at him! — of an upstairs school, *née* High, at Bodkins, thirty miles distant, and when we caught sight of him he was making a little tour in his first vacation.

And this is the way he got the school. His pockets bulged and bristled with credentials whose signers trailed fragments of the alphabet after their names. Degrees were not so thick then as they are now, but they were immeasurably taller, weightier, and more significant. These counted; and a patron of a large pattern picked him up in Detroit, whirled him out to Bodkins, fitted up a room for him over a store, gave him a home for the instruction of his three sons, and

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guaranteed him twenty-five scholars at three and five dollars a quarter. This was princely, in a country where pork was a penny a pound, wheat forty cents a bushel, butter to be had almost for the spreading of it, and a diligent hen could earn only five mills a day. The reader must have noticed that Theophilus is said to have been "picked up;" which is merely the old way of announcing what this euphemistic age means when it says "has accepted a situation," as if, possibly, he did not try for it, fly for it, cry for it. No discredit in that.

The Bodkins folk gazed after the callow schoolmaster as he passed along the streets of the pretty little village, while the groups shut down the gates of their conversation and stared dumbly at him until his ears grew red enough to be ripe. If there is any minor crime against the proprieties meaner than another, it is dumb gazing, with occasional muffled murmurs of inaudible comment.

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CHAPTER II.

A REVERSED WOLF-HUNT. — THEOPHILUS SEES HIS NAME IN PRINT. — AMBITIONS REALIZED.

IT was twelve miles to a printing-office, and thither Theophilus betook himself for circulars. It was an old-time office, looking like Lucifer's kitchen; the press was one of the a-kimbo, all-elbow kind that creaked like a barn-yard gate; and ink everywhere, from the bridge of the pressman's nose to the door-handle. It was a roaring snow-storm without, but within, a long-bodied box-stove devoured huge sticks of wood and turned red all over with the exertion, and the whale-oil lamps perspired, smoked, and flared, while the proprietor was constantly picking the crusted wicks with a pin that he wiped on his hair. So everything was dirty and comfortable.

The pressman was a slim, dividers-legged young fellow named Jones, who had married a bright-faced, bright-minded girl with a brass brooch, on five dollars a week, half "store pay," and lived at the top of an outside flight of back-stairs, while a swill-pail with one ear was always underfoot at the bottom. It was past midnight before the circulars were worked off, and Theophilus had a twelve-mile ride in the teeth of the storm. He had had a pleasant evening. Between

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"pulls" and going around the press to ink the types, Jones beguiled the time by telling what he meant to be and to do.

"You may sneer," said he to his employer, "but I am going to own a paper in the State of New York, with the biggest *kind* of a circulation" — "Ha, ha!" roared the old printer — "and be mayor of a big city" — "Ho, ho! what a blasted fool!" interposed his auditor — "and ride in my own carriage with a driver and silver-plated harness" — "He, he!" tittered the printer, "you'd better feed your pig; he has n't had a nubbin since morning."

Theophilus recalled that night thirty years after, when he met his Honor the Mayor of a great city, A. L. W. Jones, the proprietor of a great paper, and rode beside him in a carriage whose be-buttoned driver wore his hat in wide mourning for the loss of his manhood. It had all come true, even to the plated harness. But the old printer who furnished the laughing accompaniment that stormy night died, and his poor wife said, "I do so want a real nice coffin for John, but" — with a burst of sorrow — "I've not got five dollars in the world;" and so he died, and was buried without a headstone, and forgotten. "Look on this picture and on this."

The moon, almost worn out, waded through the broken clouds; the wind had died; it was a gloomy, heavy night, and six miles of the road without a house. Gnarled hemlocks, racked with rheumatism, showed their distorted joints and discolored bones

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along the way, and owls made hideous inquiry from the thickets; but Theophilus was neither lonely nor afraid. The ponies scurried along at a lively pace, and the driver's glowing dreams and fancies kept him warm.

A howl at the right of him, a howl at the left of him, more howls behind him. Theophilus lost twenty pounds in a minute. He knew as well as if he had been one of the Roman brothers and suckled by a wolf, that it was the unfriendly hail of hungry wolves he heard, and he let out the little span for all it could do. The howls grew nearer and louder. He saw gaunt forms leaping and struggling through the snow; one came up on each side of the sleigh, two ran in the track behind, and so, like an equipage with gray galloping outriders, it went. Theophilus lashed right, left, and front. He had a terrible four-in-hand. He fancied he felt the rank, hot, wolfish breath. He surely saw their lolling tongues and the froth like unmelted snow. What if the frightened horses should plunge into the ditch! What if a wolf should bound into the sleigh! What if this wretched fate should overtake him!

Even in his extremity the story of little Red Riding Hood flashed before him like a picture suddenly revealed in a dark place. He thought bitterly of it all. Fright, that had paralyzed his tongue, let loose, and he screamed and shouted like a maniac. Nobody heard but the silent night, the indifferent moon, and the tireless wolves. His old reading of Siberian tales flashed upon him.

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He wrenched from his neck the comforter his mother had knitted for him and whirled it out upon the snow. The wrangling brutes pounced upon it and tore it into shreds in a minute. This gave him a gain of two rods, but they pulled up on the stern chase, and Theophilus jerked them a blue-and-white mitten. Even then he had time to think of the fingers that made it. The mitten checked the pack a few seconds, and a few seconds more they snarled and quarrelled over the worthless morsel. The panting ponies never gave in. The other mitten followed its mate and brought another breath of reprieve. It was a race of one young life with four grisly shapes of death. His handkerchief went next. He thought of his precious circulars. It would take his pursuers a minute to tear up the package. Only a minute, and then another heat. Perhaps if the smell of blood were on it, then a little longer. He gave one of his fingers a sharp bite, and drops of blood dripped upon the paper. The ponies were worried and blown. It came to him that his testimonials were in his breast-pocket. No sooner thought than done. He tore a button out, grasped the roll of papers, and gave them a desperate fling. They parted and flew like a little flock of white-winged birds. A blessed gust of wind, awakened and guided by Infinite Mercy, caught and scattered those pages away from the track. The yelping, frenzied pack plunged for them hither and thither. Theophilus had five rods — eight rods — ten rods the start. Cold? No! His hands glowed as if he were

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filling ladles with molten iron, and the sweat ran down his face like rain. The chase was about up.

A light shone through a little window by the roadside. It was the first house. The ponies dashed unbidden through the open gateway and up to the door. A big watch-dog bayed a loud alarm that sounded to the poor fellow like a melodious welcome. The door instantly opened and let a hearty voice out: "What's the row?" Just then, a half-mile down the road, he heard the howling good-by quartette of the distanced wolves. "Oh, ho!" said the man; "chased by a pack of wolves, was he? But who is this? I swan to man if it ain't the new school-teacher, by all that's great! Here, young man, give me your hand." But the young man made no response; he had fainted dead away like a woman. The man and his wife carried him in, grasping, even in his insensibility, his blood-spotted, beloved circulars. In the morning, escorted by the farmer and his wife, the watch-dog, and all the children, Theophilus rode into Bodkins the hero of the hour, but at too great a cost to be coveted again.

Two days after Theophilus returned from his reversed wolf-hunt the whole region broke out malignantly with a pink-and-yellow rash of handbills. Those circulars lodged anywhere, — hung on roadside hazel-bushes, from hooks on the blacksmith's wall, on guide-boards and at fence-corners; and barn-doors caught the eruption, much to the Principal's disgust. One boy incorporated four or five in the tail of his

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kite; another made "a trainin' day" cap of one of the pink variety.

Poor faded handbill! I saw one the other day among the slender belongings poor Trent left behind. It was the hue of a dead leaf, — foliomort, — and no tint could be more appropriate. It is, so far as I know, the sole remaining vestige of the Bodkins High School. Let us hope not, but believe that a few yet survive who remember the young teacher with sentiments of friendship and regret, — regret that the days of "Auld Lang Syne" are so long past, too few remain to take up all the parts and sing the song through.

Those efflorescent documents were signed, "By order of the Board;" but what kind of board nobody knew, though a few suspected that it consisted of three men, one prominent in society, as his waistcoat amply proved, who died so long ago that their widows died also, and they were all pfoperly laid away as "consorts" or "relicts," as the fashion of speech was, — and a most lugubrious fashion indeed. What so forlorn as "a relic" in crape, as Deacon Worden persisted in saying when he asked prayers for "a relic of our departed brother Simmons," as if the good man had left several relics to bewail him at once.

Theophilus fancied his name would look well displayed in old English; and so "Theophilus Trent, A. B., Principal," was arrayed in that style of types, leading to vexatious misunderstandings. Few could read it until one day the cooper said, "Why, that 's

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Trent's name! He must be some kind of Dutchman, High or Low — I guess High, for that's what the school is;" and so the impression went abroad. One sweet-lipped girl wanted to read Schiller and Goethe and all the rest before she had learned the grammar. An old German frow walked two miles to bring him a pail of sour-crout, and when she got within a half-mile of the village, Dr. Milliken sent his man out to find and *bury* something that must have died of its own accord, by the edge of the slough. A leather-breeched Dutchman assailed him with guttural salutations, and wanted to talk about Faderland with him; at all of which Trent reddened and said nothing, while those round about said much and laughed more.

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CHAPTER III.

SCHOOL OPENS. — BODKINS SOCIETY. — A HUMAN HIVE. — THE DEBATING CLUB. — A TRIAL BY JURY.

IT was a momentous morning when the bell rang for the first day of school. The tintinnabulation was due to a bit of geometry, for the instrument was a triangle belabored with a section of nail-rod. There were no other bells in town but sleigh-bells and cow-bells, if we except a couple of bright, pretty girls who were called the belles of Bodkins. Theophilus wielded the *baton*, — leastwise the nail-rod, — until one day a dashing fellow from Detroit drove by, spied the solo performer disciplining the triangle, and called out, "Where 's the *bones?*" referring to the early composition of a minstrel troupe. After that, he employed a small boy to play for his tuition, until he caught him standing on his head with the nail-rod between his toes trying to sound the tocsin. Seizing him by the collar he promptly reversed the bell-ringer, boxed his ears, and discharged him as having sinned against the dignity of the intellectual commonwealth. The pupils came from over the hill, down by the mill, and across the River Raisin, as light-hearted, true-hearted, and merry groups as ever crystallized into a school.

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Even there the traces of blue blood were very apparent. Three or four families held their heads well up, and, it may be added, with some reason; dressed in the fashion not a month old from Detroit, sang in the choir, had the best seats in the schoolhouse on Sundays, — some had chairs, — for there were no church and no "church-going bell" within twelve miles. It was a sort of Juan Fernandez with no Cowper to sing of it and no Alexander Selkirk to be sorry for.

Low morocco shoes with bright buckles embedded in a ribbon bow, white stockings and silk; bare-legged, sturdy girls, whose home-made wear might have been pitched on with a fork; young men in glossy boots and broadcloth; lads in red toes, breeches tow likewise, and stone-bruised heels, — all these crowded and crossed the High-School threshold. Men and women, years enough older than the Principal to be his uncles and aunts, came from the country round about and brought their dinners in little checked Indian baskets, or did chores night and morning for their board, — the only matins and vespers in which they officiated. These were they who brought their tuition-money, well coppered with big pennies, knotted in the corners of blue-and-white cotton handkerchiefs or chucked into a weasel-skin purse. These were they who paid in hazel-nuts and walnuts, trapped pigeons for village tables, tamed squirrels for village boys, and turned the proceeds into algebra, grammar, geometry, and philosophy, with chance nibbles at chemistry and

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hunches of astronomy. And finally, these were they that in after years sat on the judge's bench, graced the professor's chair, preached to the acceptance of mankind, presided over pleasant homes, and bettered and brightened the world. Tuition was paid in anything that is climbed for, dug for, clubbed for, or killed outright; and the largest third of the Board, who was a merchant, received the commodities as a sort of variety treasurer of the Institution, — for the school grew to be an Institution in three months, — and gave Theophilus credit.

Theophilus feared the young ladies, who sat in a row like a border of tall flowers at his right, would discover that he ever took pork — pork of all things! — in payment for literature and science; but it came out, as most things will, and in this way: A Debating Society had been established, of which several of the older pupils, a couple of young merchants, a blacksmith with a head as hard as his hammer and, figuratively speaking, as long as its handle, were members, not forgetting the talented Dr. Milliken, who stirred the ingredients for his celebrated Anti-bilious Pills with the garden-rake and the barn-shovel, walked about in the broad pans with his unhallowed boots, laughed at Theophilus's disgusted amazement, sang "Sweet Vale of Avoca" and "I knew by the smoke that so gracefully curled," like an angel, and lisped like a schoolgirl.

These debates drew a hall full, and if nobody knew anything more, at least he was better able to lay a

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ready hand on what he did know. The Society waited six months for a name, and finally blossomed out as the "Omega," because, as the Doctor said, "it wath the latht Greek letter and he hoped the Thothiety wath the latht of ith kind." One night the question was, "To which is the intellectual difference among men more owing, education or nature?" It was not, you see, a case of 't aint — 't is, but *which?* Theophilus presided by virtue of his principalship; and his strength, so far as discussion went, "was in sitting still." He lacked a ready tongue; and then he thought his legs too small to look well if he struck a Ciceronian attitude. In fact, he fancied he needed a toga. It is too late to excuse either his legs or his weakness.

It was customary to prelude — Boston adopted the idea a generation later — the argumentative field-night with a few morsels of declamation masticated by some pupil, such as William Pitt's apology for being a young man, "On Linden when the sun was slow," Patrick Henry's petulant declaration that if he could n't have what he wanted, he would as soon die as not — in fact sooner; or "Rienzi's Address to the Romans," or a speech to the Mummy. For this particular night Theophilus had primed a small thistle-blow of a boy with just two lines; and the little fellow, whose stockings were as red as his face, and who kept stepping without going anywhere, and accompanied himself with his fingers, playing on the outside seams of his pantaloons legs, a little bigger than a couple of flutes, piped out, —

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" 'T is education forms the common mind :
Just as the twig is bent the tree 's inclined,"

and sat down with a bounce. That was Theophilus's adroit way of proclaiming his sentiments on the question without saying anything. Some laughed; but Laura Larkin, an alliterative, black-browed, level-eyed girl of sixteen, whispered, " It 's real mean of Mr. Trent to put a babe and suckling up to do for him what he had no business to do himself."

Then the miller, the minister, the doctor, and a merchant did battle. When the smoke had partially cleared away, Deacon Billings, who went about lifting his words with a cant-hook, — for he stuttered like a wrathful Welshman, — rose in a distant corner, brushed his thin, pale hair forward above his ears as if driving his ideas to the front with a couple of wisps of flax, and said : —

" M-mr. Chairman, I d-don't belong, b-but it seems to me a l-leetle mite late to argur this q-question. This " — here he hummed like a bumble-bee — " this v-v-*vill*age has turned to and 'stablished a school, and our ch-children are all g-goin'; and ef it 's nothing but *natur* that makes the d-difference, then less shut this shop up and let Mr. T-trent t-trot. I leave it to him ef I d-did n't send him a hull sleigh-load of the b-b-biggest kind o' hogs to pay my five ch-children's schoolin' ! "

The Deacon closed with his flag flying. Snickers, giggles, and laughs went round the room; the tall wall-flowers whispered and smiled and watched The-

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ophilus, who swallowed and colored and wished the Deacon had stumbled over one of his own words into a pit before he reached the swine. But everybody's gravity went overboard when the Doctor rose with, "I move, Mithter Chairman, that the quethtion be amended tho ath to read: To which ith the difference in the intellectual character of men more owing, *pork* or *nature?* and that we do then adjourn." Both motions prevailed, and the "Omegas" paired off and departed.

For days the Principal found sly pencillings, written with the left hand for disguise, but unmistakably by girls. Those bits of paper lay about, on his desk, in his hat, slipped like a marker in his text-books, running after this fashion: "If one sleigh-load of hogs will educate five children, how many children will twelve pigs educate?" "Why is Mr. Trent like a teacher in a classic land? Because he takes his pay in *Greece*." One girl, more hoydenish than the rest, sent him a pig's tail roasted to a golden russet, looped up with a blue ribbon and a little tag labelled in a crinkle of a hand like the ringlet of pork it accompanied, —

"Tuition for One Infant."

Charles Lamb would have apostrophized that tail in his quaint and loving way, but Theophilus hated these wretched things. They touched his dignity as an A. B., and he only heard the last of it when he joined the girls and laughed too. When the man

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you laugh at laughs back, it is time the first chorus quit.

Nothing could be busier inside the honey-range of a colony of bees than that school. The Principal had a finger on a word of two syllables one minute, and was demonstrating how they measure celestial distances the next. He wheeled like a teetotum from a preposition in grammar to a proposition in geometry. He set a copy for Jake Overmeyer, mended a pen for Celestia Chase, and drew a comet's orbit. He helped a fellow out of a hole in Virgil by his figurative ears, and then lent a hand to lift a rogue who had hidden under a desk by his literal ears. He splashed through the rivers of India to get at the causes of the American Revolution. He showed a button-headed boy how to hold his pen, ordered him to take his tongue in, hold his head up, and stop squinting, and the next minute directed a gentle-voiced girl to conjugate the verb "to love." A big fellow comes to the platform with a sum that, like the sluggard, won't "work," and a young lady asks the next instant the location of Michigan City, to which he promptly replies, "On Lake Michigan, in the State of Michigan," and thinks no more about it. In ten minutes that young lady returns with an open atlas, and a slender white finger, like the finger of fate, on a dot, a little knock-kneed row of letters floated out on to Lake Michigan beside it, and a green line meandering round it, fencing Michigan City safely in with the rest of *Indiana!* The unhappy

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young man felt as if a fiery-furnace door had been opened full in his face, and some friend were trying to put him out by pouring ice-water down his back. Trent suspected the girl of being a trapper, and said a pretty sizable sin would not have worried him as much.

He that knew the weight of things as distant as the moon, and the probable whereabouts of telescopic worlds, to be tripped up on such a selvage of sand as Michigan City! - He did not realize then, as in after years, that while even "Homer nods," and Milton makes Eve her own daughter, — "Fairest of all her daughters, Eve," — a man that professes to know everything is a fraud, and he who believes him is a fool.

The school thrived. Pupils came from abroad. The work was earnest and thorough; and while the Bodkins Institution was up the first flight of stairs, its reputation was climbing the third. Mrs. Perkins lived at the lower end of the village, — a sort of washed-out woman; in fact, not fast colors. Her hair was a subdued corn-color, and so were her eyes, and so she was herself. She said one day at a quilting, "Mr. Trent has *fakilty*, I call it, for making them big boys toe the mark; proper cur'ous, too, seein' any one of two dozen of 'em could throw him out of the winder and not half try." But nobody tried. They all saw that Theophilus had but one ambition, — their improvement and best welfare, — and he never wearied; and the pupils took fire from his

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enthusiasm. It is the best system of school government extant. The public sentiment of a school, as of any other civilized community, is nearly always right, — the exceptions prove it, — and Theophilus found himself in the overwhelming majority, with a paltry minority of offenders against him. Indeed, he often left the students to settle a question he hesitated to decide himself, though they never suspected it; and they always came to a just conclusion.

A poor boy, of poorer parents, — his mother was not the least like what "Cæsar's wife" should be, — came in his poverty to get a little education. He had neither money nor books nor a respectable wardrobe. These were supplied, and Robert Merritt was enrolled *en route* for the famous hill that has been mentioned once or twice by name. He studied early and late. He conciliated his mother by doing for her everything his hands found to do. She denied him candles; he studied, lying upon the hearth, by the light of birch bark. She robbed him of the coat that had been given him; he just wore the old one, that out-Josephed Joseph's, — for it was "a coat of many colors," and of *pieces* withal. He kept right on and distanced many who had long been loitering on the course. He had purpose, decision, energy; and the three come very near being something better than genius.

One day he rushed into Theophilus's private room, his eyes swollen with weeping, his little figure convulsed with emotion, and burst out, "I can't go to

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school any more; I have come to bid you good-by and thank you, Mr. Trent, for all — your — kindness."

"How is this?" asked the teacher.

The lad hesitated, but at last the facts were extorted, like evidence from an unwilling witness. From the day that Robert entered the school, a tall, man-grown student named Harrison, belonging to a family of wealth and position in Detroit, had been ridiculing the poor boy, his shabby suit, his coarse shoes, his poverty. This the victim bore bravely and silently. He was a little Spartan in the woods of Michigan. Few dared take his part but the girls. They pitied and petted him, and gave Harrison cold looks for the lad's sake. Irritated by this recognition of his ignoble spirit, Harrison, having learned the story of Robert's mother, at the first opportunity publicly taunted him with being the son of his mother. This broke the boy's spirit, almost his heart; the persecution was greater than he could bear. He could be a martyr for poverty's sake, but not for that, and ran half-frenzied to his teacher.

Thoroughly aroused, Theophilus nervously paced the floor like a caged specimen of the *carnivora* eager to devour somebody. Slight, slender, pale, not a sign he would ever be "a whiskered pandour," he did not bear the remotest resemblance to a champion; he only said, "Be at school promptly at half-past eight to-morrow morning. If I cannot protect you I'll — Well, no matter. Now go."

It is one of the puzzles of mankind how things

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"get out;" so now it was in the air that something would happen in school the next morning, — what a wonderful appetizer the *happenings* of life are! — and every child and chick, sixty strong, were in their places before the triangle had been punished, and among them Harrison, a head and shoulders above his fellows, and poor little Robert, shrunk away in a corner as if there were no room at all for him in this crowded world.

Theophilus looked paler and felt taller and braver than he ever had before in his short life. He was about to right a social wrong, save the weak from the strong, save the strong from the curse of its own strength — if he *could*. The room was so still that a foraging mouse crept boldly out from some crevice into plain sight and no one laughed; they all thought there was bigger game. What so silent as breathless expectation, except death?

"I have a story to tell and a case to present," the teacher began, "and I want you to hear the first and decide the last."

Every pupil listened. Was he about to fell some big offender with a club, that slight young man? Who knew?

Theophilus went on: "Suppose a boy without the blessing of a good home, to whom hunger is no stranger and tattered clothing no disgrace, whose mother is not like *our* mothers, — for who in all the world can equal the mother that bore us? — suppose this boy, with wishes beyond his years and ambition

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above his fortunes, desiring to gain an education that will help him to make life worth living, — for remember, unlike you, his bare-handed life is all the thing he possesses worth having, — should for this sake endure manfully all privation and hardship, bitter reproach at home and indifference abroad, and suppose he should finally enter a republic like this school and show himself an earnest and faithful student, winning approval at the first and success at the last, thinking all the while with a glad heart under his ragged jacket that he is fitting himself to be a man among men. Do you not think such a boy, struggling alone, with nobody to lend him a helping hand, deserves the regard, sympathy, and encouragement of us all? That we should smooth, if by nothing more than a kind and friendly word, his hard, rough way, — ah, so much wearier and sadder than ours? Now those in this school who think so will please raise their right hands." Every fist of them all, from the white-fingered girls to the brown-palmed boys, came up like a dense growth of bamboo. "Now," resumed Theophilus, "let me make another supposition. Let there be in that same school, not a helpless, struggling lad with everything against him but his noble resolution, but a young man with rich friends, golden opportunities, social position, a noble mother, a father honored in the land. Suppose he should take every opportunity to persecute and abuse the boy I have described, to revile his name and taunt him with sins for which he suffered but which he did not

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commit, inflicting words upon his victim bitterer and more cruel than brutal blows, — what punishment would he deserve?"

"Take him out and thrash him well!" a square-shouldered fellow exclaimed before he thought.

"I submit," the teacher said, "two questions for your decision. Those of you who believe the almost friendless boy is worthier of their regard than the arrogant tyrant — that a young man of a spirit so cowardly is undeserving of their friendship, will please rise."

The whole school, one man excepted, stood upon its feet like a congregation about to receive the benediction; and who shall say it did not silently fall, like the dew of Hermon, upon the heart of every one of those manly boys and womanly girls?

"Please be seated!" There was a strained and oppressive stillness, save here and there a sob, and even rough, sturdy fellows gave a back-handed wipe with a coat-cuff across their eyes.

"Now," said Theophilus, "I have about done with this business; you have decided it for me justly and wisely, and I approve and accept your decision. Robert Merritt, come forward." The little fellow crept along; every eye was upon him.

"Those who will befriend him say 'Ay;'" and it came good and strong like a wind through the woods, and the teacher concluded: "To you, Harrison, I have nothing to say. If you can live in a community entertaining the opinions they have just expressed, I

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do not object. Should you remain, I think you may need assistance yourself, and I will aid you if I can; your peers have rendered the verdict and not I. This is a republic of humanity more than a republic of letters."

"Three cheers for Mr. Trent's republic of humanity!" called out young Granger, and they were given with a will, perhaps all the stronger because given in a place where cheers, unlike a motion to adjourn, are not "always in order;" while some of the smaller ones, the little chips of the school, which are always nearest the heart, began to blubber and bubble like a row of little kettles filled with boiling hasty-pudding, crying for they knew not what, like many of us that are neither children nor idiots. Harrison left the Bodkins High School like electricity down a good conductor, and Robert in after years became a man of affairs commanding respect and achieving signal success.

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CHAPTER IV.

DESTITUTION OF BODKINS. — NO LECTURERS, BRASS BANDS, NOR PIANOS. — BIOGRAPHY OF A REFORMER, BY A TOPER. — THEOPHILUS TURNS THIEF.

NO telegraph, no telephone, no railroad, no electric light, no morning paper, no gong, no rink, no theatre, and four miles from a stage route, Bodkins seemed a bit of a peninsula fenced off from the world and the bars up; and yet there was not a leaden-footed minute in the twenty-four hours. Not more than twenty-five people in the town knew what *ennui* means, and nobody had it by that or any other name, nor yet dyspepsia. The old people as a rule were hearty and cheery, and the young folk were quicksilver. To be sure, in some dwellings along the river they domesticated fever and ague ("fevernagur" in the vernacular) and took cholagogue — a blessing they never swallowed the *word!* — but the fever and ague kept everything else off. While they entertained that, they were too busy to be fatally ill.

Lecturers had not been let loose, — those small mountain howitzers on casters, that trundle about, loaded and primed for one shot, then limbering up and going somewhere else to shoot. These peripatetic pedlers of literary ware, often much the worse

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for wear, were not yet. Yes, one man. His theme was the "Rising Glory of the United States," and a collection was taken up at the close. The mantle of prophecy fell upon the lecturer, and he declared that in 1880 the United States would be twenty-five millions strong, whereupon a lawyer rose and disputed it. *He* would be satisfied with eighteen millions, *he* would; and the modest man is yet alive. Neither did eight hundred young women, with faces and voices pretty and sweet, glide with shining trails upon platforms and "do" fragmentary Shakespeare and thrilling rhyme and pathetic *morceaus* tearful enough to keep in any climate without an added pinch of muriate of soda, declaiming, proclaiming, and exclaiming with the most natural unnaturalness, their portraits smiling from shop-windows, and executed with a paste-brush upon dead walls.

No tenting gypsies of the sawdust, tan-bark rings in mimic buff did four-horse acts, nor piebald clown made sport for Bodkins. No smutted "end man" of a minstrel troupe looked over the whitewashed fence of tall shirt-collar with face so black and teeth so white, and set Bodkins in a roar. One practical thing to be learned from a minstrel show done in charcoal is, that if you are too lazy to brush your teeth you can black your face!

If that magnificent wilderness was exempt, like happy Pharaoh, from the plague of lecturers, it was strong on addresses and speeches; for politics and melon-patches are alike, — they thrive wonderfully in

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new countries, and statesmen "come up" all over new land, and so tenacious of life they cannot be killed with a hoe. Even Bodkins had two statesmen who nearly every week saved the Union and abused the President; one member of the Legislature, and patriots thick as buttercups in summer. Theophilus, though "no orator as Brutus is," was frequently invited to open his mouth, whether there was anything in it or not, in the presence of the audience. On one occasion he was selected to address the County Temperance Society, O. S., at the Four Corners. "O. S." signifies an organization that could lawfully refresh itself with anything brewed, squeezed, or crushed, to wit, beer, cider, and wine, but stood with averted face and hands in pockets when the portly decanters of pale lemons drowned not in Malmsey but in whiskey, sprigs of tansy come to grief in the same element, mahogany-colored brandy, juniper juice, or the innocent looking spirit of molasses were set up.

There was but one professional toper in the village, and he made periodical pilgrimage to a distillery eight miles distant, with a shiny jug black as a cricket knotted up in a cotton handkerchief. Returning from these expeditions after dark, he would blunder through the village talking to himself or singing in a maudlin way, "With all thy faults I love the — still." Between times he was as grave as a graveyard. The president of the Temperance Society was a man of substance, meaning money, who had not long before come into the country, and his zeal was fourth-proof.

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Sykes, the poor juggler, so to call him, professed to know the president's personal history, and occasionally rehearsed it in the cooper's shop of an evening in the flare of the broad fire. "Why, there 's Mr. Goodrich," he would say, "the temperatest man as ever was, and *r-i-c-h*, — w'y, Crusoe could n't hold a candle to him. I 'll tell you how he come to hev time to turn Temp'rance man. You see, down in some of them Eastern countries he run a distillery for more 'n twenty year and kep' a store a'jinin'. First off, he was a kind of blessin' to the farmers, and last off, a cuss, *I* should say. Well, he bought all the corn they raised, and all the rye, and all the pertaters except what they kep' for the pigs and the children, and turned 'em into whiskey; and then he bought all the wood they could bring to keep his distillery fires agoin', and them farmers traded at his store till they howed im so much they dasn't trade anywheres else, and gin mortgages on their farms and carried samples of the rye, corn, and pertaters hum in jugs; and as they never could make out which they liked best ontil the farms was drunk up and the wood was burned up and there was no more ashes to speak of for Goodrich's ashery, and there was nothin' to keep up his fires and nobody to bring him corn, and so he sold everything and everybody up and out, and gethered his money by bagfuls and come West 'to grow up with the country;' and now he sets beside the Elder and the Squire at public doin's, and talks about the sin of swallerin' a thief to steal brains, and

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when he meets me in the street he never speaks, but looks awful sorry and sick like. Land! he need n't; for it 's jest sech fellers as me that *made* him, and I 'm precious glad I did n't hev a hand in 't."

To return to the expectant Temperance Society. Theophilus never composed an address, never wrote a school composition that would light a fire, because too green. He began, "Temperance is a good thing," and his mental team balked right there and looked over its shoulder. He thought of his little Dutch pupil whose composition began and ended, "Health" — he said *helt* — "is one of the greatest blessings ever inflicted upon man," but it did n't amuse him. He was in a state of mind, and in his misty confusion grew desperate, and turned *thief* for the first and last time in his life.

Finding an old book containing an eloquent temperance address by an eminent divine, in a trunk buttoned up with brass nails in a red and white calfskin, he copied it *verbatim* in the dead of night, and then, to make all safe, *burned the book.* No ostrich ever did a sillier thing. He felt like a burglar and fire-bug in one, and that some just judge should give him three years to think it over in, and almost like interrupting the sentence with, "Make it four, your Honor, make it four!" He gave the plunder for all it was worth, he fancied, and at the conclusion a vote of thanks was moved and carried with loud ayes and the bark of a dog. A girl tripped up to the speaker's stand with a cluster of love-lies-bleeding, bachelor's buttons,

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and a branch of live-forever tied up with them; a good old lady teetered after like an ancient two-wheeled chaise, and gave him a huge bunch of carraway; the king-bees of the audience buzzed that it augured well for Mr. Trent's future career — yes, States Prison! The Elder said, "If we get such things in the green tree, what may we not expect in the dry?" Major Bolton — he fought the battle of the Melon Patch in the militia service — offered him his snuff-box and asked him home to dinner.

But the smoky district schoolmaster, who was putting out "Baker and Briar," not to say putting *in* "Cider," before Theophilus was born, remarked, "P-r-e-t-ty well, yes, pretty well for a — boy!" Theophilus decided that man would not make a successful thief, because he did not know enough to steal a good thing when he saw it. Shades of Chalmers and Channing, "rest, perturbed spirits!"

Happily there were no reporters in Bodkins, else would Theophilus have come to a premature end; but the audience never found him out, and he set up from that day as a reformed kidnapper, and denounced the crime, wherever he detected it, with a bitterness only explained in the light of this revelation.

Yes, Bodkins was rather destitute. Its streets were unlighted in the evening, except by moon and stars, and, in nights dark as a wolf's mouth, people went about with lanterns, some of tattooed tin like a savage, some of glass, some of oiled paper that

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wrinkled shut when they had done with them. So they flickered about the village like fire-flies over a marsh. The popular fashion in boarding Noah's Ark was universal. They walked in pairs, and it was pleasant to watch couples slowly approaching through the darkness, a murmur of subdued tones in the air punctuated with little happy laughs, — he holding the lantern to light her feet, that went twinkling in and out, as the quaint old poet said, "like little mice, as if they feared the light," — or sometimes not so little. *Lantern* nights were the most desirable nights in the calendar for village flitting, — far preferable to broad moonlight, — but not a brace of them confessed it. Neither was a gentle rainy night unwelcome, and no umbrellas counted too small for shelter, nor, lacking them, were black woollen shawls despised, flung like the wreck of one of Kedar's tents over two heads that neighbored like twin cherries on a stem. Even Theophilus was glad for their sakes that King Alfred did not invent the lantern so long ago the world forgot all about it, and possibly he was glad once or twice for his *own* sake.

There was one blessing that blind Bodkins enjoyed unawares. Had it only known, what gratitude would have warmed it like a Christmas fire! There were but two pianos in the village, one of which had lost half its ivories, and there was no musical dentist to treat it; and the other, like a Bible in an unrepentant sinner's house, as Goldsmith's broken china, "wisely kept for show," was covered with dust you

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could write your name in, there being a "fitty" poor relation in the house, who in her ignorance and misery could not abide "sech jinglin' dewin's that made her feel as if she should fly." But having no place to fly to, they mercifully let the dust lie; and there the piano stood in "the other room" quiet as a coffin. "Silence is golden."

Neither had Bodkins a great brass tulip of a band full of bell-mouthed monsters to break window-glass; but there was no lack of melody. The blacksmith and his brother played German flutes like Orpheus, two youths from over the river whipped a pair of fiddles with no small skill, the Doctor fingered a clarinet, there was a bass-viol to give harmonious grumbles, and then the clear, fresh voices of the girls who sang like larks when the dew is on the world; and all made harmonies hard to be forgotten. The old teacher said, thirty years after, that he often heard them like music across the moonlit water, though every one of the players and singers, the sweet Orpheans of Bodkins, had gone where there is never a false note in the song.

"Oh County Guy, the hour is nigh," "Oft in the stilly night," "The Minute Gun at Sea," "Allan Water," "Bonaparte crossing the Rhine," "Over the Water to Charley," "I see Them on their Winding Way," would come to him as if he perceived them by some new and subtile sense, but always in the twilights, — those borderlands of time where, if ever, the gentler spirits walk, a spectral orchestra; but speak and they

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vanish, strike a light and the music fades away in "a dying fall."

There may be a wonderful amount of conversation in total silence. It seems a paradox, or a Celtic way of putting it, yet it is neither; but they must be the closest of friends thus communing with never a word, enveloped in a common atmosphere; for as every man has a mental horizon, so every man has a spiritual atmosphere. Thus did Theophilus in his later days sit with the writer while he recalled, as if thinking aloud, the years that were gone.

"I hear them now," he would say, — Theophilus grown old and gray, — and how could he help it, who had died neither with an "i" nor a "y"? — would call me Horatio and begin. "'There are more things in Heaven and —' Pshaw! Give Hamlet a rest; hand me my pipe and I'll smoke. Hear that hand-organ in the street! They box up a world of good tunes with a crank to them, after all. Tut, tut! four teeth gone in one bite of melody. Give the grinder a dime and tell him to stop or go on, it does n't matter which."

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CHAPTER V.

THEOPHILUS TURNS FINANCIER, AND A LANDHOLDER.—A COURTSHIP.—CONCERNING WILD-CATS.

THERE was a bank in Bodkins. It was a feline animal, but it never showed its claws. The woods were full of wild-cats,—*banks*, whose gold and silver were passed about like snuff-boxes by pleasant old ladies aforetime; passed about from bank to bank just in advance of the expected examiner, who went solemnly through the absurd formality of counting the same coin over and over. There were about forty banks within a radius of fifty miles. They were in saw-mills and private houses and all sorts of unexpected places, except hollow trees. If you were so happy as to be introduced to the president of one of them, you might be sure you saw the cashier, the teller, and a majority of the directors,—a patent man with all the combinations. The notes were in the height of the engraver's art, as also were the maps of cities never to exist anywhere except just over the way from "my castles in Spain."

Theophilus developed a certain genius for finance. He purchased a lot depicted on a lovely map of Columbia City. It fronted the public square and the court house, possibly the capitol, and a fountain

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as large as twelve weeping willows; spires rose on every side like gigantic fingers pointing not to heaven, but the route of all investments made in that locality —up. Crowds of people were exhibited in every stage of velocity, from the contented limp of him who has gotten gold and the gout, to the business lope of him who is bound to have the gold if he can and the gout if he must.

It was an inspiring sight on the map, and Theophilus secured the eligible lot for one hundred dollars payable in commodities, such as wild-cats and shinplasters. Indeed, if the property had been $99.35, or $99.06, and he possessed nothing but notes, he could have made the change without breaking a bill! The money was wonderfully elastic, but apt to break. No counterfeits were needed, for the genuine was as bad as possible. Theophilus meant to see his real estate during his first vacation. The agents for Columbia City presented him with a map of the metropolis, which he framed with glued acorns and suspended where he could watch his lot.

How many mansions he built on that little-finger-nail of a lot no one knows. He consulted Flaxman's Outline Illustrations of Homer, and Tooke's Pantheon, and selected a columned temple as the model, that would cost at least two hundred thousand dollars. Again, it would be a cottage with a broad veranda all around it, like the brim of William Penn's meeting hat. In fact, that veranda was so extravagantly wide that most of the interior of the house

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was out of doors. His wife — he had none — sat at one of the windows playing a harp. He saw the flash of her white hands in the moonlight; but how he could do that with such a veranda, unless the moon was grazing down in the door-yard, is hard to understand. He saw the flash all the same, however, as plainly as Ossian ever saw a vision. He *liked* harps, sentimentally, for he had never seen or heard any variety but a jew's-harp. It was a sacred as well as a classic instrument, and that was enough for him. Angels had harps, the Middle Ages were full of them, and royal David was king of harpists, — a sentiment slightly wilted by the remembrance that a certain maiden aunt, the aversion of his childhood, was a harpist also, for she was incessantly harping upon the total depravity of boys, and wishing mankind had been all girls, like Thomas Jefferson's Lombardy poplars, that were all of the gentler sex, and so died young and left no families worth mentioning.

The day after the purchase of the real estate he went to his school duties with a great accession of self-respect. He felt like bowing to his own reflection in the looking-glass, but on reflection he refrained. He felt that he had a hold on the solid world; that he owned "a certain piece and parcel of land," as the deed ran, from the centre of the earth to the top of the sky; that if he wanted to build a second Babel ever so high, not much of anything could hinder him but a confusion of tongues among the workmen.

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Theophilus had something to do with the bank likewise. Saturday afternoons he passed in the president's room, armed with a pair of shears whose shining blades were as long as the tongs' legs, cutting apart great sheets of beautiful bank-notes. How pleasant the fives, how charming the tens, how beatific the twenties! He felt to see if his vest could be let out behind, should he become "a bloated aristocrat" and the garment prove too strait. Once, during a week's vacation, he took twenty thousand dollars of that beautiful Bodkins money, packed it in a satchel secured with grain-bag strings,—a shabby piece of baggage that seemed just recovering from some cutaneous trouble,—and went on an expedition through two counties in the State *to swap cats;* that is, to get the bills of the bank he represented so far away from home that they could not return the same day with the demand, "Specie for this." When a lad, Theophilus was sent by a neighbor to lose cats. Taking four half-grown creatures in a bag, he walked two miles before he dropped a kitten; another mile, and he loosed the remainder and hastened home to get the promised shilling for the service. When he reached the neighbor's kitchen-door, the four kittens were lapping milk out of a pan. And here he was bound on the same business, and he wondered if with the same result. Happily it was otherwise, and the foreign paper enjoyed a Bodkins circulation while the bank of Bodkins took breath.

If honesty were a thing at all safe to praise without

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affecting the eulogist's own reputation, I should say, look at Theophilus, poor and a pedagogue, with twenty thousand dollars in his satchel, and he brought its equivalent safely home. Why did he not slip away to Canada and live happily ever after? No lightning to catch him, no railroad to pursue him, why did n't he? True, that money would not have paid his way a rod beyond the boundary of Michigan, nor bought a red herring in the Dominion; but the fact remains, — he returned with every dollar. Having been quite successful in his barter, and thinking he felt twinges of financial ability, he began to meditate erecting in the not so very distant future a banking house on his Columbia City property, but — he never did.

These things inspired a sense of personal dignity to which he had been a stranger; and by an easy transition he came to think of being the founder of a family. There were in the High School blondes, brunettes, and neutrals, some with noses freckled, aquiline, Grecian, and devout; forms *petite*, Minerva-ish, plump, dumpy, and lean. Theophilus selected the future harpist of the Columbia City cottage with little ado, and straightway began to grow exacting and severe with her in school, lest some quick-eyed maiden should suspect his partiality. The other girls began to be sorry for her and to denounce the teacher for what they called his abuse, counselled her to rebel and they would all stand by her. What a phalanx of gentle Amazons! As for the young lady herself, she did not seem indignant, depressed, or in

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any way unhappy, but laughed lightly when the persecution was discussed, and told them that she had nothing to say of Mr. Trent but that he was the very homeliest young man she ever saw in her life. One of the sweet girls saved up this artistic comment and managed that Mr. Trent should hear of it, but he abused her none the more.

There was no understanding between the teacher and the pupil, no word of love or its belongings. It was in no sense a plot. She had always been the magnet, attracting the most obdurate hearts in school or village; they radiated around her like steel filings; they attended her to singing-school, evening service, and neighboring Fourths of July; they tucked the wolf-robe tenderly about her and whirled her away over roads smooth and white as a satin ribbon; they touched caps, tipped caps, lifted caps, bared their heads altogether, when they met her; perhaps tore caps when they met each other.

Meanwhile Theophilus made a third in the little party of the priest and the Levite, and went by on the other side. He called upon her a few times to assist her in her Latin, as he should.

One of those times when the frogs were singing, he wrote on a slip of paper covered with Latin exercises, "Will you marry me?" and carelessly passed it over to her across the table before the observant eyes of all the family, simply saying, "Please translate that." She studied it a long minute, — the clock ticked loudly, the fire snapped fiercely, the knitting-

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needles clicked sharply, — a long minute, and she turned the color of a Lancaster rose, turned back to the tint of a York, gave him a quick, questioning look, wrote one little word, and returned the slip.

The little word danced on the paper beneath his eyes like a fairy or a fate — if fates ever dance. In the blurred light he could not tell whether it was dressed in two letters or three. It grew clearer; it *was* in three letters, for it was "YES."

Mr. Trent picked up the cap he had thrown in the corner, hesitated, opened the door, said "good," pinched the "night" in the door, and was gone; and that is all there was of the courtship. No mouthing of poetry, no apostrophes to chin or eyebrow, nothing about a ripe lip, "as if a bee had stung it newly," no "Meet me by moonlight alone," no midnight strolls along the river-bank, no long lingerings at the gate. It was all as prosaic as a court clerk's conversation with a witness: —

"Do you solm'ly swear to tell?"

"I do."

"Kiss the book," — except that nothing and nobody were kissed. No choice bouquets came by messenger with love-notes among the buds. Bouquets were in all the woods, — lady-slippers enough for the fairy dancers of the world, blue anemones, wood violets, white lilies and Johnny-jump-ups; and the air the village breathed was composed of oxygen, nitrogen, and, in their season, wild roses. No sleek-bodied carriage drew up at the girl's door. Theophilus did

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not own even a poor little Mexican burro, far less a horse; or even a wheelbarrow, much less a phaeton; and there was no livery in town. The horses were principally oxen. Perhaps there was never so colorless a wooing or troth-plight so unromantic.

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CHAPTER VI.

A BUZZ IN THE VILLAGE. — THE WEDDING.

TIME passed. The weeks went like the swift opening and shutting of a door;

> "For lightly falls the foot of Time
> That only treads on flowers!"

Rumor had it that the girl was vacillating between a young merchant and a rich man's son who wore store-clothes and fine boots. Theophilus was as rigid in school as ever and the girl's friends as sympathetic.

Only the Elder and the treasurer of the apocryphal Board were taken into the matrimonial counsels, the former arranging with the singers and players some appropriate music a little like a combination of a stave or two of Solomon's Song with one of the exultant psalms of David. As the wedding was to be on Sunday evening in the schoolhouse, they were a little limited in their musical selections. The treasurer advanced Theophilus twenty-one dollars in crisp, new bills of the Bodkins bank for the bridal tour (!), saying as he gave it, with a laugh, "If you were as many years old as there are dollars in this roll you would get your cage before you caught your bird."

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The village hummed like a troubled beehive. The belle was about to be married, but to whom? Some said the heir, some said the merchant, while others insisted it was a creditable young man from Lisbon, who had brought the girl some spruce gum, sweet-flag, and a tame robin. The young man spoke English, for the Lisbon whence he came was not in Portugal, but about eight miles from Bodkins. What an absurd way Americans have of misnaming things!

Nobody knew. So almost unconsciously self-elected scouts shadowed the suspected youths. It was the very Genesis of the detective-service system. Their whereabouts and whatabouts during the suspected Sunday were known to an inch and a minute; but Theophilus went his way unmistrusted.

Sunday had come, — a September day with an Easter sun; just wind enough to play an Æolian harp, just warm enough to make out-of-doors a blessing and mere living a delight. Like flocks of startled birds, the girls were in a twittering flutter of expectation. There had never been a wedding in the village; nothing but one funeral, and that was not what Mrs. Wright often told of seeing down in Vermont, — a "milingtary" funeral, — and therefore not enlivening.

Night came slowly down. The schoolhouse was illuminated to a dazzling degree. A photometer would have shown at least a forty-candle power. Two tall, globe oil-lamps — mates — stood upon the desk; lamps hung in tin candlesticks around the

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walls; a large bouquet of flowers stood upon a stand before the desk, serving for the once as an altar. Some kind hand had covered the old rusty stove with a new red-edged horse-blanket and crowned it with branches of feathery asparagus. A fire-new horse-shoe, painted white for lack of gilding, hung above the door. The ceiling was not festooned save with a few disused cobwebs, and a floral bell was conspicuously absent.

At an early hour the lanterns began to twinkle from the remotest parts of the village and converge toward the red schoolhouse. It looked as if one of the heavenly constellations had fallen and was on a migration. Everybody was there in Sunday wear. Even poor Sykes came in an old dress-coat he brought over from Ireland, and a black stock that threatened to choke him on the spot.

Mrs. Jenkins was there, who had not been to meeting for months, laying it to her "rheumatiz," as if that overworked complaint had not done enough for her without being charged with causing neglect of religious duty. She spent Saturday pinching into shape her old leghorn that had done no duty for many months except holding papers "of pennyr'yal" and elecampane, as it hung from a rafter-pin in the garret. It flared out in front like the blossom-end of a horn of plenty, and the old lady's head had apparently dropped, back-hair downward, into the little end of the same instrument, and when she had pulled it to a horizontal, it acquired the effect of one

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of those sheet-iron hoods that turn with the wind on chimney-tops to prevent their smoking. Mrs. Jenkins smoked — but never when she wore the leghorn.

Father Bowen was there in his black satin vest, and his horse-collar coat with tarnished brass buttons. There was something almost pathetic in those black satin vests that outwore the wearers, donned on birthdays, death-days, good days, and great days. The old man was married in that vest, and the chances are that his old wife, if she survived him, buttoned it for the first time in her life and he was buried in it. There was no lack of bell-crowned beavers, brushed until worn at the edges as if they had been driven in harness.

There was no lack of young wives and comely matrons; and ah! there were the bright young ladies of Bodkins High School, massed like calla lilies and roses in California, near the desk, — a bank of beautiful flowers, — to get a good look at the bridal pair from top-knot to slipper-toe, or maybe to deter a second bold hand from tearing another blossom away. But whose hand would pluck the first was yet a question without an answer. Altogether, it was an eminently wholesome and respectable company that packed the schoolhouse that September night, sat on the sills of the open windows, and leaned with clustered heads in at the open door. Years after, Theophilus said, "I always wished that friendly congregation a good deliverance from all the evils of the world. Heigh-ho! I fear most of them have gained it already."

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There was an expectant air on each face. Every one was looking for *some* one. There was the bride in her usual place with the players and singers, — a little paler, a little more in blossom, so to say, but no trace of tremor or self-consciousness. "Can it be possible," the whisper went round, "that she is going to sing at her own wedding?" And one added with a toss of doubtful amiability, "I should as soon expect to sing at my own funeral!" There were the heir and the Portuguese and the merchant, all properly bestowed, and there, in his far-away corner, was Theophilus; but nobody gave him a thought, for what was he but "a looker-on in Vienna"?

The singers and players were in their places; the flutes, the clarinet, and even the fiddles; for the Elder, who was liberal for that day, said that if Deacon Billings objected to the carnal fiddles he could wear magnifying glasses and would *see* nothing but bass-viols, whatever he thought he *heard*, — and ears are uncertain witnesses at the best. The clergyman had not arrived, there was no shepherd's crook to push and pull the flock into order, and one of the reckless flutists struck up, "Come, haste to the Wedding."

"Right in meetin' and Sabba-night too," Jerusha Colegrove said with a pharisaical sniff; and all the other instruments struck merrily in, as if the desecration had been planned and rehearsed for a month. When Deacon Billings caught a few notes, he knew he had never sung psalm or hymn in that ungodly measure, — he lived too soon for that, — gave a great

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groan, and tottered up to go out, and Mrs. Murray, who always kept a raven croaking "above her chamber door," whispered, "I'm afraid the Deacon's *took* — he's been ailin' a consid'able spell." At that instant the Deacon and the tune came to an abrupt halt, for there stood the minister in the open doorway taking in the situation. He waved Brother Billings back to his seat, wiped off a smile with two fingers of his left hand, and passed through the crowd to the desk.

A man of noble presence, a dome-like head, an eye that never looked without seeing, he towered in the desk like a tree in a flower-pot. His wig was newly oiled, he wore a new coat, and he had a new thirty-five minute sermon appropriate to the occasion, — a recession of full fifty minutes from the prescribed metes and bounds of that day. Can it be that those sound, stately old gospel sermons could have been the big trees in the theological woods, and some of the modern discourses only the riding-whip sprouts?

The air of the schoolhouse was fragrant with cologne, late roses, and sweet dispositions, and not a trace of peppermint. How was the bride dressed, do you ask? Who wonders what colors the roses and lilies will wear next summer? Brides, whether they think it or not, are quite alike, — the bride in calico with a blue sprig in it; the bride in calla satin, lace, orange-flowers, and about to be born out of a filmy cloud of veil into the new world of wifehood. They are sanctified and glorified in the taking of

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the vows. For the moment, they are invested with a glamour and a grace that make them alike before the altar, as, in later days, — ah, how often, how soon, and how surely! — alike before the tomb in the severe and silent dignity of death.

There was a sort of sacred overture, then the reading of a passage from the thin and delightful Book of Ruth, and then the cloudiest doubters were sure there would be a wedding after all. A brief prayer, more music, then the sermon from Ephesians, the fifth chapter and last clause of the twenty-eighth verse: "He that loveth his wife loveth himself," and then the doubters *knew* it.

It had been arranged that during the music at the close of the discourse the minister should come quietly down in front of the little candle-stand, and the signal for the candidates to present themselves before him should be the passing of his handkerchief across his brow. It is a mystery what he could have been thinking in his absent-mindedness, for he blew his *nose* instead, — a loud and cheery blast, — for the Elder had more vocal organs than his brethren.

Nevertheless the bride, though not expecting to be summoned by a horn, slipped lightly down from the high place in the choir, and Theophilus also arose as if walking in his sleep and hastened out into the aisle.

"There," whispered Laviny Herrick, "Mr. Trent hates her so, he won't see her married, — maybe he wants her himself. Look! He's going out!"

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But Theophilus turned the wrong way for that, met the bride as she reached the aisle, took her hand, — you could have heard the tick of the minister's watch upon the desk, — and there, face to face with the Elder they stood, the slight young pair, and some of the young ladies began to cry.

Then the simple and solemn ceremony began, and before the congregation recovered from its surprise the words were uttered, "What God hath joined together let not man put asunder," and the youth and the maiden were man and wife.

A prayer, brief as our Lord's, followed, craving blessings upon the Twain-One, upon this cloud of witnesses, upon all mankind. The congregation rose for the benediction; then the players and singers struck up, though the loveliest was lost out of the choir; soon the lanterns were flitting homeward to the murmur of many tongues, and the red schoolhouse was left to its unwonted adornings and its loneliness.

No best man, no garden of bridesmaids, no white favors, no ushers, no intoning of anything, no Wedding March on the great organ, no crush of carriages, but a wedding despite them all. As the little party turned into the main street, a group of young men — the older pupils of the High School — broke the Sabbath with, "Three cheers and long life to Mr. and Mrs. Trent!" and the pageant — who, shall say it was not a pageant? — and the wayside congratulations were ended.

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CHAPTER VII.

PLANNING THE TOUR. — BODKINS WASHING-DAY. — THE WEDDING JOURNEY.

ON Saturday, Theophilus had despatched Job Lane, the shoemaker's boy, with sealed orders to Manlius, twelve miles distant, to procure a carriage for a three-days wedding journey, though, strangely enough, he did not name for what occasion he wanted it. The bridal tour was being considered on a basis of twenty-one dollars.

"Down the Rhine, along the banks of the blue Moselle, up the Alps, would be nice," she said lightly.

"Round by the Evening Star and up to the Mountains of the Moon would be nicer," he replied.

"Yes! The Moon is the very place, — the Moon it shall be! Only yesterday I heard two old gossips talking across their garden fence, and one said, 'If they' — pointing; meaning *you*, meaning *me* — 'do marry on nothin' but school-teachin', then I say they're *lunatics*.' *Won't* we feel quite at home and ever so cosey up there 'in the moon'!" Then, soberly, "Theophilus, suppose we go to — to — *Manlius*."

"'Suppose,'" he said; and the route was settled. Job was supplied with stage-fare from Trenton, the nearest stage point, to Manlius, but he preferred to

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take the walk and keep the money. After giving the coin a vicious bite to test its quality, he spit on it for luck, and pinned it securely inside his coat-cuff. That silver coin was a pocket-piece that Theophilus sentimentally devoted to defray the first expense for her sake. Job had directions to drive into Bodkins after dark and stable the horse in a suburban barn. He obeyed orders as far as that went, and spent three hours of sacred time that did not belong to him in grooming the horse and wiping the spots off the wagon-body with his handkerchief, dampened with the broad of his tongue as if it were a postage-stamp of the future. Theophilus did not see the establishment until Monday morning.

The beast was a tall, scramble-heeled, giraffish animal, with a long neck, a long tail, long legs, and long ears. In fact, it is at very long intervals one sees precisely such a creature. He was fluted on the sides like a washboard, and one of his crooked legs went up with a jerk like a jumping-jack's. The wagon-box — there were few covered buggies then — was crescent-shaped, like a youngerly moon thrown on the flat, or rather the curve, of its back, panelled, painted a feeble yellow pathetically trimmed with half-mourning, and the unsheltered seat had a perpendicular back like the spine of the upright man, that set to the rider like a gridiron and made him feel as if he had a number of spines.

The bridegroom dropped down upon the barn sill and contemplated the turnout with a nauseating

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feeling that something else would turn out, at the depraved unfitness of things. *Tout ensemble*, it might have belonged to Eutychus, who fell asleep and out of a window while Paul was preaching, or to some good man who lived just outside of ancient Ephesus.

"J-o-b," said he slowly, if Job *can* be said slowly, as that worthy was licking a harness-buckle bright, — "J-o-b, did you tell the livery man what this team was for?"

"W'y, sir, I jes told him the schoolmaster over to Bodkins wanted some kind of a rig for a little scoot." "Rig! scoot!" and yet Theophilus felt better; his dignity was safe; the livery man, like the heathen, should be let off easily, for his was the sin of ignorance.

It was too late to rectify the blunder. The hour was fixed for beginning the wedding journey, and there was nothing for it but that Job should pilot the craft to the little white cottage and anchor it to the fence, while Theophilus followed meekly along at a goodly distance. He felt as if he had been stealing again and had secured something not worth keeping, when a roadside boy — there *are* roadside boys, *weeds* — yelled, "Say, Job, got red o' your *biles?*" — a most irreverent allusion to the Patriarch of Uz — "an' who turned that old nag out ter die an' never onhitched him? Where 'd you find him?" And the facetious scamp threw his heels up, stood upon the palms of his hands, and sang, —

"I say, old man, your horse will die."

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Job secured the animal, and Theophilus arrived and leaned on the gate. The instant the young bride got a glimpse of the conveyance she screamed with laughter: "Nothing in Dr. Syntax or Don Quixote can hold a candle to it. Did you do it for a joke, and are we really and truly to go abroad" — here she laughed again — "in that — what is the real name of it? And so roomy behind that we can take three grists to mill at once; we're going to keep house, you know. Did you borrow or buy it, or" — here she drew near him and archly whispered — "or *s-t-e-a-l* it? It was no sin, so don't feel bad about it. But how people will enjoy looking at us, and we to be looked at! It will be as good as a pl—" She halted in the exact middle of a monosyllable, for she saw her young husband's distressed and mortified face.

A few full-length neighbors framed in their doorways, a few kit-cat figures leaning out of windows, a few district-school boys with their chins resting on the top of the fence, like a row of grinning gargoyles, gave an additional twang to the nerves of Theophilus. He stumbled through the story of the blunder as well as he could, she accompanying him with ripples and peals of laughter, but finally they agreed that nothing could be nicer.

"Why," she said, "every one will think we are old married folk! Here, Job, are two shillings; keep them till you take your wedding tour, and be sure you engage this horse and wagon. Come, Theof." And he brought out a square leathern trunk and a cotton

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umbrella and slipped them under the seat. His little bride skipped up unassisted, and just as the wheels began to turn, three or four friends at the door threw handfuls of rice at them with both hands, as if they were scaring chickens out of the garden; and two hurled pairs of new slippers, for they stood in their old ones. The poultry picked up the rice, the people picked up the slippers, the horse picked up his feet, and the wedding journey began.

It was washing-day in Bodkins, and garments of every fashion and none at all, kicked, flouted, and ballooned in the breeze. Frayed petticoats waved salute, and long stockings heeled and toed from the lines as in honor of the passing pair. "We 'll accept it all as personal, any way," the bride said; "see that frilled nightcap alight on that fluffy old hen with chickens! They could n't have done much more for us, unless they had hung *themselves* out and made a soapsuds apotheosis of the whole thing."

Many hands belonging to arms bare to the elbow waved good wishes, hats whirled, and smiles lighted the way. When just in front of the blacksmith-shop, and about to strike out of the village, the Vulcan shouted, "Keep a stiddy rein, Mr. Trent!" A flash of light, a puff of smoke, the loaded anvil gave a startling roar, and things began to happen at once; the horse made a bolt like a Texas steer, plunged into the wooden frame for slinging up oxen to be shod; Theophilus turned a backhanded somersault over the seat, and landed heels up in the wagon;

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his wife, pale and cool as marble, grasped the reins, and looked over her shoulder to see the Principal of the Bodkins High School *hors de combat*, his feet playing in the air like a calf in a market-wagon with his aft legs loose, and there were tears in her eyes that could not extinguish the laugh in her voice as she exclaimed, "Oh, Theophilus!" The smith, full of concern, — indeed fright had almost washed his face, — rushed to the aid of the first game he had ever brought down with his anvil; another man seized the horse by the bit. But there was no need, for the beast was as unable to run as if he had been set up by a taxidermist and equipped with two glass eyes; the harness hung about him like a leathern fly-net, and Mrs. Trent sat down on a disabled grindstone and laughed. Happily, no one saw the affair but the smith and his helper, except a blind man who was feeling the way with his cane, and asked, "What 's the matter?" "Oh, nothing, Uncle John," returned the smith, "but a bit of a circus." And he crept along, muttering at the poverty of the information.

The horse having been rescued from his violent misclassification of himself in the animal kingdom, and the harness set to rights by the smith and the shoemaker, the couple for the second time set forth, the blacksmith throwing a couple of horseshoes after them, one of which struck the wagon; so near was the farce to being followed by a tragedy, contrary to dramatic law and order. This great friendly fellow had acted like an enemy, instead of the loving man

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he was, bound to do the married children honor, and with a heart in his breast, as Mrs. Meredith vowed in her excitement when he rescued her child from Lake Placid at the risk of his life, — "a heart as big as an oxen's."

The day was one of those that almost do your breathing for you; little inspirations of pleasant air come of themselves, and you feel for the time like an anomalous Æolian harp whose music is in mere being and living. The road beneath the wheels was silent. It wound in and out among the trees that parted to let it through, and hung over the passing travellers to caress and to bless them. Draperies of vines heavily tasselled with grapes were within reach of their hands; logs richly upholstered with moss lay here and there, so many green velvet divans.

A fox-squirrel galloped slowly across the track, with its plumage lifted more gracefully behind it than ever was a lady's train, and brave enough to deck the bonnet of Roderic Dhu. The red variety, with its clean white throat, perked up in the loop of a vine like a canary in a ring, saucy as a gamin, scolded, swore, and jerked all over with spasms of impudence. Rabbits with ears a-peak squatted motionless as little brown hummocks and watched them. A dissipated-looking robin, in a faded red vest the worse for wear, and a feather or two awry upon his head, as if he had trouble with the sleek blue-jay yonder, and drank, sat on a hazel-bush. A belated redbird flashed like a live cinder out of a red maple

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in flames like Moses' burning bush. Had the bird set the tree on fire and flown away by the light of it? Everything seemed ready to make love or to quarrel, and Nature fitted very closely about the wedded couple.

Then they came where the woods parted around a broad bay of wild meadow that had never felt a scythe. A little farther on, and the tinkle of falling water betrayed a spring at the foot of an oak, that ran over a stone threshold and wandered away. They halted and drank, dipping up the water in the hollow of their hands, — the first wine of the wedding; each gave a merry toast, the wife sang some such absurd old song as "The Mistletoe Bough," and Theophilus listened in silent admiration; for so far as singing went, he was like a bird in a state of perpetual moulting. Something claws its way up the other side of a tree, — always the other side. Its tail laden with rings, like vulgar or injudicious fingers, betrays the raccoon, its owner. The road curves along the green margin of Lake Placid, with two snug fleets of ducks lying well off shore. It was the grave of an affianced pair who went down together and never rose. No inscription anywhere tells their names or story, but girls idly floating in little boats used to trace them with a finger on the lake; it availed nothing, for "their names were writ in water."

Nature had not "struck." She was only going out of business and dressing herself for a holiday. It is a dangerous precedent to be followed by human

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kind, for the decorations of coveted leisure are often the unconscious apparelling for the solemn festival of profound repose that bears another name all use and few can fathom; and when they preach about it, sometimes the text is, "He giveth His beloved sleep." All the woods wore the very fringes of the coronation robe worn by the king of colors. Frosts had not come, — frosts that scorch and kill but never lend a touch or tint of any beauty. The leaves were not dead but only ripened, like the fruit they sheltered or concealed. The butternuts and hickories dripped gold, the poplars showed their silver linings, the sumachs were drenched with richest wine, the beeches were bronzed, the maples splashed with broken spectrums, carmine tongues lolled in the sunshine, oaks spread wide their wrinkled, russet palms, while the little junipers, the arbor-vitæ, and the pines still clung, and ever cling, to "the wearing of the green." Things had taken to decking themselves with jewelry: the bitter-sweet puts on its yellow topazes, the wild rose sports the opal, the black and raspberry bushes are out in jet and ruby, the indigo plant wears clustered pearls, and here and there a bush is rich in bluest sapphires.

Talk of bridal journeys! What was this but the great magnificence of a royal progress?

Not a soul did they meet save when they looked in each other's eyes, till round a bend slowly limped a horse with a pathetic drop of the under lip, and his front hair in bangs, carrying a big grist and a small

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ten-toed boy with a large piece bitten out of his hat. He did not look clean, not the least like Ganymedes, but the rather as, having been moulded in damp clay, he was turned off unfinished and needed sand-papering. It was not quite the apparition to confront "love's young dream" in a waking state, for the horse resembled a nightmare; but it was the best there was, and all there was. Theophilus stopped one horse, the other stopped himself and painfully reached with a tapir-like lip for a straw projecting from a corner of the wagon-box.

The boy opened fire: "Jew live round here? Mebby you 're runnin' away — looks like it. Where 's your folks?"

It was their turn: "What is in that bag?"

"Cawn. Goin' t' mill."

"Would n't it be a good thing to let your horse carry some of that corn in his stomach? It would lighten the load and encourage the horse."

"Hey?"

"Give the horse a feed right here."

"But I cawn't; he hain't no teeth."

"So you are going to mill for *teeth*, are you?"

"*Naw;* to git cawn ground so 't he k'n eat it biled. He cawn't eat nothin' that ain't *biled*."

And so the singularly unbefitting encounter ended. We have Shakespeare for it: —

"Why should they stay, whom love doth press to go?" —

the boy for his meal and the bride for her dinner.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE STAGE-TAVERN. — A HONEYMOON DINNER. — A DISASTER AND A RETURN.

ACROSS an anti-dyspeptic log bridge, up a little hill, out upon the great State Road, stood the stage-house. A large square sign swung upon hinges that creaked dismally in the wind, hung upon a gallows. Upon it a large libel of a deer was depicted, and around it the legend, "STAGE TAVERN." The day of transcontinental names for caravansaries had not come. It was a large wooden building, first white, last wasp-nest gray; a large piazza furnished with wooden benches nicked and lettered with jack-knives wielded by some of Satan's "idle hands," a large hall, a large bar-room with a large fireplace, a sort of kennel for a pair of fire-dogs with heads as large as Rhode Island Greenings, a large dining-room, large Franklin stoves wherever they could back one up against a chimney, a large shed where people drove in out of the weather, a large watering-trough, a large pump that groaned as if the world were dry, a large landlord, a large landlady, — large all over were the tavern and its belongings, and nothing little but the window-panes — which, being green, might be larger when they were riper — and the prices. The first were

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seven by nine; the last, a shilling apiece all round for man and beast, a hearty welcome thrown in, with an abundant dinner for man, and hay and oats up to his ears for beast. Nothing dear but the deer on the sign-board, which only meant they had venison sometimes. The Game Laws were not yet.

Fire swept it all away, and its site has borne tall corn, rank and strong, this many a year. A poor old man who lived down in the hollow thought the desolate place was haunted, and said that in wild and windy nights he heard the mighty dinner-bell that stood upon the hall table, and the rattle of wheels, and the cracking of whips. However that was, no Concord coach in the wood rocks up to the hospitable door like a ship with a sea on; no four-in-hand files out without a guide from the roomy stables; no great and brave, no fair and gentle, no nobodies "in the flesh" file into the spacious dining-room, welcomed by the landlord and instructed by a little sign on the panelled door: "Stage Passengers, Two Shillings."

Theophilus pulled up to the front steps with no effort and little flourish. Everything was alert, from doves waltzing on the eaves, to a brindled cat boxing her kitten's ears. Somebody laughed, but the couple felt safe. No one knew them. The landlord swung the wooden stairs to the wagon side with unusual alacrity; an ostler rushed to the horse's head as if he did not *want* to be held — at least held *up;* the passengers alighted, the lounging setters on the piazza turned pointers in a twinkling, every nose of them

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indicating the tender game. The landlord bustled ahead, threw open the private parlor door; the landlady whisked off a floury apron and came smiling in, asked Mrs. Theophilus to lay off her things, asked both if they were well, and both if they would have dinner; set a china cat square on one end of the mantel, scared a fly off its *vis-à-vis*, — the other china cat, — threw the front windows wide open, pulled back the curtains in their braided loops, and hurried away.

Then the row of setters outside unscrewed their heads a little till every face fronted the room and every brace of shoulder-blades was in sight! The victims felt like a couple of insects under a microscope, and looked at each other in a puzzled way. Mrs. Theophilus took refuge in a laugh, as usual: "The humblest of people are pretty sure of attention three times, if not four, in their history, — when they are born, when they are married, when they are buried, and the lucky ones with another chance, when they are hanged."

But when three giggling young women, healthy as peonies, came in to disencumber one little table of a large family Bible and a circle of gilded and shining books, all in their Sunday clothes, worshipping around it, suggesting a fashionable church on a saint's day, and proceeded to set the table for two, the secret was out. Job, the amiable little villain, had told every one he saw, except the only man he should have told, the happy proprietor of the outfit; and so they all

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knew them as a hunter knows a pair of pigeons. Mr. Theophilus felt it was almost a tragedy, and Mrs. Theophilus declared it the genteelest kind of comedy.

It took three to bring in two fowls that were chickens in the spring and done to a golden brown, while a half-grown girl peeked in at the door, and a sturdy boy whose bread-and-butter had missed his mouth, asked her in a stage whisper, "Be *them* them?" The teacher thought he could give that boy a free emphasis lesson in the right place with an appetite. Had he only said, "Is them *them?*" the teacher's wrath would have slept.

While the couple were admiring the picture of a coach-and-four on the wall, where not a hoof of the sixteen touched the ground, but skimmed the tops of the dust-clouds they could by no possibility have kicked up, one of those bubbling handmaidens slyly slipped a red love-apple beside each plate. The landlady spied them.

"Some Eastern people call love-apples tomatusses, set a sight by' em, and eat 'em; but I spleen agin 'em and raise just a few in the garding to set round for looks. They *do* say they'll make cancers." Then, catching herself up as if something that instant occurred to her, "Dolly Ann, did you put them things on the table? Don't play tricks; take 'em out." And looking more like a peony than ever, she bore the uncanny fruit away.

There were fresh vegetables, an Indian pudding red as gold, a peach pie, gooseberry preserves, fruit-

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cake, and coffee; and the motherly landlady sailed in with, "I thought it might seem more *family*-like to set the table here than in the big barn of a dining-room;" and then, producing two apples from her pocket, added, "Our folks in Detroit sent me by the stage-drivers along, a dozen York State apples, and I thought I'd bring you one apiece. Maybe you like apples, and maybe you are York Staters."

The army of observation on the piazza finally dwindled away, dinner was over and the horse brought around. The landlord and his wife uttered their good wishes and good-byes, the latter saying with a sympathetic smile, "Bein' you are on your bridle-tower, I am goin', though it's a bit behind time, to throw a little grain of rice and an old shoe after you. You won't mind? I was sure you would n't." The shoe in question was a tavern bedroom sheepskin slipper, with neither heel nor quarters, such as were produced simultaneously with a bedroom candle for guests on retiring. In fact, it was a Chinese appropriation. That was before the embroidered-slipper-making epidemic swept young ladies to a cordwainer's fate, and brown-haired, silver-tongued clergymen, if they had as many feet as a fly, could be double-shod all around with new slippers.

Away they rode, and the rice and the shoe followed after, as also the dog; while all the family and the human flood-wood that eddied about a tavern grouped and posed on the long steps and threw their eyes after the wagon, amid much laughter and a buzz of unintelli-

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gible talk. It had been a remarkable day. Now on three occasions they had been made targets for shoes of morocco, sheepskin, and iron, not to name their being shot at with a blacksmith's anvil. They bowled merrily along — the horse thought he was going home — for miles, as full of content as the late white butterflies upon the golden-rod by the roadside, that opened their pairs of pure pages, half-closing them in a tremulous way as if caressing the sunshine, or as if they would press a ray or two like a flower in a book if they could, — with never a cloudlet of fear that the blessedness might not always last.

The tourists were on their way to Hebron, where they would halt for the night, when they came to a deep run. The planks of the bridge were strown about like the wreck of a lumber-yard, and no way of crossing save by a very steep and rough track down the bank where venturous travellers had driven, forded the stream, and tugged up a crooked, slippery way on the other side. It was a slough rather out of business; the business of a Michigan slough being to persuade you into it, you and your horse and everything that is yours, and then the more wildly you struggle the deeper you sink, — horse, wagon, and rider. Then you cut the harness to give the beast a chance for its life, while you look helplessly about, one of your boots sucked off in the mud, — for sloughs have a habit of never being weaned, — and you rail at the world and sigh for another rail to pry out the wagon.

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"What shall we do now?" said the bride.

Theophilus looked blank. He never could drive down that precipice into that gully and get out alive. The horse would stall, the wagon upset, and he and his be drowned, or at least choked with mud and mortification. So he rattled off the calamities.

"Try it," she said vigorously; "give the horse a smart cut and make him go. Give *me* the whip. Are you afraid of *my* drowning? I'll skip over that rattle-trap of a bridge like a cony, and you can drive over alone. No? Then you skip, and *I'll* drive."

Not to be abased before his wife of a day, he gave the horse a desperate slash. At this, the animal laid back his ears frightfully and plunged, but the instant he struck the brink, braced his forelegs like the stoutest half of a capital A. Just then a hog that had wallowed himself to hippopotamus-color scrambled out of the mire with a loud *ough!* and struggled up the opposite bank.

This was too much for equine equanimity; wheeling and plunging, the horse brought the wagon about in the whisk of a tail, and halted so abruptly that the two riders made a bow to the animal so abjectly oriental that they narrowly escaped a dive to the wagon-bottom, as if thanking the creature for his performance. Theophilus seemed disgusted, but he was secretly glad. They looked both ways — nobody coming; at the sun — and the sun was rapidly going; at each other — and laughed a chorus.

"What shall we do?" asked one.

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"Camp," said the other. Then a long silence.

"Lend me the whip," she said. "I want to cut that thistle's head off and make believe it 's the horse. I *feel* like it."

The shadow of a great tree between them and the sun had crept along the ground until it almost reached the equipage; the horse's blessedly stubborn forefeet were already in eclipse.

"Do you see any one coming, sister Ann?" cries Mrs. Bluebeard.

"Nothing but night," answers Theophilus.

"Not two galloping brothers to the rescue?"

"*Bother* the brothers!" he muttered. Had he only been educated for a stage-driver, he thought, he could have dashed right through the difficulty, no doubt, and his wife would have been proud of him and praised him, and called him after Jehu or some other mighty reinsman.

More silence. Some bull-frogs over in the swamp began to talk: "Trent! Trent! *Get* OUT! *Get* OUT!"

"Hear that, Theof? They are talking to you — the best thing anybody has said yet." Then, solemnly and slowly, "Theophilus, let 's go — home!"

"*Let 's;*" and away they went.

"What shall we tell them at Bodkins?"

"Homesick — loved them all so we could n't stay away over night."

They whipped briskly by the stage-tavern, and both aimed their eyes at the horse's ears and looked neither right nor left. There was a delicate dawn in

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the east, as if young Night were holding an infant Day in her arms. The moon was rising behind them, and the shadows from the west swung round like the hands upon a dial. The sky was rich in stars. The silver lights and busy shadows trifling with the wind filled the open woods with pleasant phantoms. If the scenery had been gorgeous by day, it was fairy-like under the moon; Nature had turned another leaf for their perusal. There was a stir in the woods though the winds were half asleep. A mist concealed the meadow as they passed; unseen campers had drawn the curtains of their tents, and all was still.

"Theof, some one told me that when you were in college you had an album, like a girl, and went about, like a boy, asking the girls to write in it. Did you?"

"Yes," he quietly replied; "and I remember certain lines a lady wrote that might have been written for such a night as this, but not for such as we: —

"The moon is sailing o'er the sky,
But silent all, as if she pined
For somewhat of companionship,
And felt it was in vain she shined.
Earth is her mirror, and the stars
Are as a court around her throne;
She is a beauty and a queen, —
But what of that? She is alone."

"O-o-o-h!" she sighed, "what a misery! And then *s-h-i-n-e-d*; what grammar!"

"But 'shined,' that you draw out like a wire, is as good grammar as the best." There spoke the

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pedagogue; and then his former pupil sprung the main question, "Now who 's the GIRL?"

The miles were brief as proverbs, and soon white Bodkins glittered through the trees. They drove along the still streets, not a dog "to bay the moon," and reached the small cottage they had left in the morning; and it seemed to them, so many things had happened, that they had been gone a week. It had indeed been a day to shine "like a jewel upon Time's forefinger," and as they waited at the gate Theophilus repeated the lines: —

> "Not by appointment do we meet Delight or Joy,
> They heed not our expectancy,
> But round some corner in the streets of life
> They on a sudden clasp us with a smile."

And so and thus the wedding journey was ended.

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CHAPTER IX.

A LAWYER QUOTES SCRIPTURE. — A SOLO. — EVERY-DAY LIFE. — C. SPARROW, LECTURER. — RECREATIONS.

WHEN the Principal and his wife appeared upon the streets the following day, people were a little startled, as at an apparition, but greeted them cordially, and only said, "Glad to see you could n't stay away." No one uttered a discourteous word except ——. The roses never grow on one bush and the thorns on another; we do not take our choice but our chance. Bodkins was a small place, and it had a lawyer to match. It could not have Rufus Choate, and so it had Le Roy Sharp. He had a tongue as long as a whip-lash and a sharp one withal, and when some stall-fed lawyer from the county-seat, with a lifted eyebrow and a little adipose cushion under each eye, encountered Sharp in some country neighborhood suit, he felt surrounded by needle-toothed terriers all eager to make their mark because unable to write, and when he kicked toward any point of the compass there was nothing just there to be kicked.

That long tongue exploded words of law, evidence, precedent, irony, and sarcasm on every side, fairly baiting and bringing his large adversary to bay.

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Sharp's friends said he had the persistence of Satan, the obstinacy of a mule, and the industry of a nest of hornets when a club hits it. His enemies declared him impertinent, pestiferous, cantankerous, and unlovely altogether. Which liked him best, friends or foes?

The mail for Bodkins came by coach to Trenton, eight miles distant, and to Bodkins in a gig, even as B. Franklin, P. M. G., made the tour of the United States post-offices in his day. The gig, their one frail link to the distant world, had wheeled away from the post-office which was a dwelling, which was a bedroom, which was an old bureau, and Mr. and Mrs. Trent were tripping lightly down the street, each with a large letter wrapped up in itself, buttoned with a red wafer and postmarked and priced in red ink "25 cents." Letters were luxuries, read, re-read, and packed carefully away with the trinkets and unpurchasable treasures that are in the truest sense personal property. As the two hastened on they met Sharp, who bent brows like irritated shoe-brushes, greeted them pleasantly, merely sighted and fired: "First Chronicles xix. 5, Zechariah viii. 5," and having delivered the texts like two shots from a revolver, passed on.

"What do you think they are? You remember one and I'll remember the other, and we'll get to a Bible soon as ever we can," said Mrs. Theophilus in a breath; and they did, and they read.

"Well," she laughed, touching his smooth chin with a finger, "I don't know as you would be a

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greater man if you had a grater face, — at least you would n't be as nice; and as for Zechariah — Theophilus, are the bears about here the same kind they had around Bethel and Jericho?"

"Bears! What of bears?"

"Oh, nothing, except that Mr. Robinson is awfully worn off on the top of his head, and there are more than forty-two saucy children in Bodkins, and I think as the principal teacher you ought to warn them to be civil to him."

"If I should, you would hear a dozen in a week crying all over the neighborhood, 'Go up! go up!' and not a bear about; but what has it all to do with Le Roy Sharp's second gospel-shot from Zecha— "

But his audience had vanished, and the next minute he heard her in the garden singing snatches of an idle song of the time, —

> "When I was a school-boy aged ten,
> Oh, mighty little Greek I knew,
> With my short striped trousers, and now and then
> With stripes on my jacket too."

Theophilus looked out of the window. A nervous mother of chickens had with a most unmusical flurry attacked the songstress, — a strident scream as if a hawk had the ruffled mother in his talons, — and there stood the soloist with the exasperated fowl under her arm like Scotch bagpipes, the bill firmly secured with a thumb and finger while she sang the song through, and as the last stanza rounded off with —

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"I am sixty to-day, not a very young man,
And a bachelor doomed to die;
Then take my advice and marry while you can,
There 's no time to be lost, say I,"

she gave the mother of chickens a toss, saying, "One at a time; there 's nothing but solos in this concert."

He fell a-thinking. Would he ever say — would the singer ever sigh, "I am sixty to-day," and if so, what then? Would Dead Sea apples, fair without but ashes within, ripen in the orchards of life, and would they ever wish for the cup of the hollowed hand, filled at the spring beneath the oak, to wash the bitterness away? How could anybody tell? The days mercifully withdraw their curtains one by one, and upon each of them, woven in Mercy's loom by angels' fingers, is the embroidered promise, "As thy day is, so shall thy strength be."

The days of the week in Bodkins were Sabbath day, washing day, ironing day, baking day, darning day, sweeping day, and picking-up-the-pieces. How dreary it all seems! But then, it is only seeming. Then, they dipped candles that hung by wicking loops from slender rods in triple rows over the melted sea of tallow like white stalactites, or, if hardened with beeswax, a suspicion of pale gold. Row after row they take a dip and then a drip, and thus they slowly grow.

Then, they made soap in the great kettle out under the trees, — soap that looked good enough to be eaten. It was not a pictorially saponaceous world as now,

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and perhaps it did not need the article quite so much. Grist and saw mills went by water, wagons ran by horses, and the coal-smoke of manufacturing torment did not sully, as to-day, the very lilies of the field.

Then, they "killed their own pork," as Mr. Walbridge would say, — as if anything could be pork without the application of knife, cleaver, and hot water, — and the sausages required no faith to make them welcome.

Then, they fried nutcakes with a twist, cooked puddings in a bag, or rarely in a stocking-leg boiled and bleached above suspicion, and baked Indian bread until it was like "the wine when it is red."

Then, at suitable seasons — the girls thought there were no such seasons — they colored yarn, the blue-dye tub standing in a corner of the kitchen hearth, with an unquestionable atmosphere to which nothing could reconcile the sufferers but the thought of the neat blue fit on a snug and shapely foot and ankle when the stockings were done.

It was all a sadly prosaic fabric to make a human life of, yet it had interludes of visiting, courting, wedding, being born, that kept the pulses playing. Nature was not yet frightened away, nor had art usurped its place. Bee-trees distilled their amber to the venturous hand; watercourses offered their cool and succulent cowslips; exquisite fragrance betrayed the wild strawberry in pasture, meadow, and woodland; blackberries, raspberries, gooseberries, and currants tolled the merry pickers on and on, etched

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with thorns, tanned by suns, straggling miles into the tangled wilderness, but happy and unwearied as bobolinks swinging upon the rushes. Wild grapes tempted the boys and the foxes with clusters festooned along the tops of the bushes, or carried up by the strong vines coiled about the great trees, like the serpents around the hapless Laocöon and his boys, till the fruit ripened in the sun on the very crest and crown of the forest. Walnuts, butternuts, and beechnuts tempted the clubs and the climbers when the sun was red and the air was still. There were raccoons to be treed, foxes to be hunted, bears to be trapped, woodchucks to be dug out, gophers to be drowned out, quails in bevies, ducks in fleets, pigeons in flocks.

Some one had seen a wolf, had found the track of a one-sided moccasin which proved to be a bear's. A boy had caught a spotted fawn in the bushes, a man had killed an antlered deer and fastened the horns on the stable wall to hang his harness on, while his far-away son would have polished and mounted and hung it in the hall for his hat. A girl had scotched a snake of twelve syllables; something had killed a sheep, dragged off a wolf-trap, caught a turkey, slept last night under the barn.

A whippoorwill marked time on the doorstone in the still summer twilights, owls screeched in the thickets. Hawks swung in great circles in the hollow of the air, motes in the eye of the great noon, or dropped like plummets among the screaming,

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feathery scud of the poultry-yard, that the timely saw-filing of the guinea-hens sometimes sent skyward without a capture. Johnny Means found a sandstone pipe and a painted feather in the old Indian trail; and for a whole month when boys went to the barn after nightfall they fancied they detected the smell of a smoky blanket, the scent of burning kinnikinnic, and heard somebody say *Ough;* and they did, but the speaker belonged in the pig-pen. So the early world of Bodkins went between times. There is something wonderfully tonic in the unexpected.

Wild flowers were not trodden to death by human feet. Little brooks that babbled along safe in the shadows of the heavy woods had not been laid naked to the cruel sun and light by the choppers till they shrivelled to a thread and perished utterly from sight, leaving no trace of their having been, but the limestone skeletons of their former channels. The great marshes were mysteries. Lonely cries of unseen birds floated over them, and lonely lights shone along the green seas of vegetation. Through their tall and plumy depths horsemen rode, — bodiless horsemen, their heads floating on the top of the green sea.

There were places on the dry borders trodden down by the sand-hill cranes where they held their solemn dances, a coupée, a high step, and a balance, — a minuet in the wilderness! With their slender, dudish legs and their absurd gravity they would "cut a figure" if they did not dance a step. This curious amusement of cranedom was witnessed by too many

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observers in that day to be a matter of question in this. The marshes are smooth-shorn meadows, the African homes of the muskrats have tumbled apart, and where rabbits sat and ruminated in their small way, wooden dinner-pails lie perdu for the mowers.

But those embroidered borders, the evenings: neighbors "ran in" at will and sat by the winter fire, or "ran over" when the chores were done, and perched on the doorstep, the fence, or the horse-block in summer weather. There were singing-schools, — courting-schools, as some stigmatized them, — grammar-schools, spelling-schools, sleigh-rides, boat-rides, and a swarm of bees, such as raisings, loggings, quiltings, huskings, and parings, and occasional capering on "the fantastic toe." Parings were the latest in the genealogy of those social and frolicsome insects, because apples were too few and precious to be wasted by heedless fingers; and literally the earliest apples were pumpkins, if not turnips. That Thanksgiving vegetable strowed the new land as if a belle of Brobdingnag had broken the string and lost her beads. But they went in Bodkins as "steeple-knobs" after the first visit of a six-year-old to the county-seat. Jacob Gates by name, he had been re-christened "Wonder" because of his round-eyed astonishment at everything he saw, and especially a church spire surmounted by a gilded globe. As he told the story, he saw "a big house with a long handle to it whittled down small and a punkin at the end to keep the hands from slippin', — and my pa

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is big enough to swing it!" To a boy of seven, his father is Methuselah at thirty and Samson from birth.

New Year, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Election day, and School Exhibition sliced the year into six segments, seasoned and frosted and altogether pleasant. A few strolled away Sunday afternoons to the graveyard, the bier like a four-handled, dismounted wheelbarrow, beside the gate. It was not a popular place, and as yet few had gone there who liked it well enough to remain. No "casket" had then been intrusted to its keeping; no shell laid there except, perhaps, in a sparrow's nest; nothing but coffins manufactured by Mr. Woodruff the cabinet-maker, who said he would rather make individual cradles for John Rogers's whole family than one coffin, especially when he had to work by candle-light. It was "enough pleasanter."

The schoolhouse door was frequently freckled with the wrecks of red wafers by which written promises of little pinches of spice were posted for public perusal. Here is one of them: —

"ELDER C. SPARROW, for years a prisoner of the Ojibways, will give an account of their barberities," — a cutting way of spelling them, — "on Thursday evening *at early candle-light*. Mr. C. S., relieing" — wicked in *him!* — "on the liberality of his awedience," — prospectively frightened, no doubt, at his account, — "will make no charge at the door. The reseats will be applied to the edgeucation" — another

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sharp cut at orthography — "of his motherless children, who grew up in ignorance at the East during his captivity." This statement seems to need some delicate physiological explanation; but long ago the Sparrows went South to find a warmer climate than this Northern winter, and it matters nothing now. Some idle rogue had scrawled beneath the announcement, —

"Who killed Cock Robin?
I, said C. Sparrow."

The boy that chalks a face with a teapot's nose, and ears generous enough to flap, on his neighbor-boy's fence, and writes that urchin's name beneath it, is identical with the lad that scribbled nonsense centuries ago on the dead walls of Pompeii; only one was a little heathen and the other is a little Christian.

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CHAPTER X.

THE BURRAMPOOTER SCHOOL. — A DRESS-COAT. — NEW-COUNTRY HOSPITALITY.

BODKINS never had a circus, but it had what was called a Geography School. Mr. Mix, a superannuated master of the birch, one day honored the village. He had two dimensions, length and breadth; the rest of him was flatness. Belonging to the heroic age of pedagogy, Mr. Mix had toughened switches enough in the hot ashes to supply half the Roman lictors with fasces, and his coat-of-arms should have been the novel heraldic combination of two ox-whips rampant, Pike's Arithmetic patent, a bunch of goose-quills, and a penknife. In quest of a class in Concert Geography, he visited from house to house and sung all lands and waters through his nose by way of exemplification. He was one of the few men who can throw one leg over the knee of the other and let both feet stand side by side squarely on the floor, as if he had just taken them off to rest and not removed his shoes. After seeing him perform this feat, all the boys in the village were trying it, and Mr. Mix's fame was spread like oil poured upon the sea. The tone of his voice was like one talking into a tin kettle; and straightway all the boys talked into milkpails, open

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cisterns, and empty barrels, to be like him, and thus the bubble of his reputation swelled exceeding large. How often qualities having no relation whatever to the business one proposes to do will secure success! Thus, if a man had a head of genuine gold-bullion hair, he might be a sort of full-maned lion on the lecture platform, if he would, — a trump card for those indispensable pieces of furniture called Bureaus, and come within a hand's-breadth of gaining as much money and respectability as if he had gone to Colchis and helped shear and share the Golden Fleece, or secured a quarter of veal from the Golden Calf.

All but the High School students took "G'ography." The red schoolhouse was nightly filled. Old men and maidens, spinsters and matrons, followed the leader, and skipped around the edges of all the Americas, treading on the toe of every cape as they skipped. He led them off in a kind of chanting tramp, with a broken broomstick for a *baton*.

Mr. Mix, *loquitur:* "SOUTH 'MERICA." All together: "Cape Gal*li*nas, Cape Gal*li*nas, C-a-p-e Or*ange*, C-a-p-e Or*ange*, Cape North, Cape North, Cape St. Roque, Cape St. Roque, Cape St. Anto*nio*, Cape St. Anto*nio*, Cape Horn *and* Cape Horn."

Then they all took to the water like muskrats, — salt water or fresh, it was all one, — and in every kind of voice of which humanity is capable, except Jenny Lind and a few more, — upper, middle, and lower register, — they set off together: "Burrampooter, Burrampooter," — the Brahmapootra of modern times, —

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"Hoang-*ho*, Hoang-*ho*, Kiang*ku*, Kiang*ku*, *Yank*tsekiang, *Yank*tsekiang." They fairly revelled in rivers: "Ohi*o*, Ohi*o*, Mississip*pi*, Mississip*pi*;" and they married one river *en route* to somebody of the same name,—"*Missis*souri, *Missis*souri!"

Then they licked up the lakes, bays, and oceans,—at least, they mouthed them,—and all with a rhythmic gait that would be popular in a Dog-Star singing-school. One fellow who was detected saying, "Bore-'em*peter*, Bore'em*peter*," was promptly ejected by Mr. Mix, which led to his method being christened "The Bore'empeter School." Unfortunate. Ridicule is as empty of argument as the sputtering stutter of an overcharged waterspout in a heavy rain, and yet it is a power. Three weeks after the school ended, one half of the chanting choir denied having had so much as the tip of a tongue in Mr. Mix's geographical mixture, and proved it by the other half, until by a mutual interchange of testimony it was clear that no one at all was there. "Bore'empeter indeed! Not we!"

The sting of ridicule is exasperating. It is the yellow-jacket, the most contemptible insect of Rhetoric. Scorn often tones up its object, ridicule never. Scorn points a finger, but ridicule leaves a mark. It has killed men outright. The noble Roman women applauded the agonies of gladiators, and we, but little better, laugh at the heartless and, as the word implies, the drunken wit of the lampoon, without a throb of sympathy for him whose manhood it insults.

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The Principal, as everybody knew, looked with little favor upon the concert method, but he ventured in, one evening, at the moment the whole mob was disporting itself in the lakes of Maine: "Moosehead Lake, Moosehead Lake, Umba*gog*, Umba*gog*," — accent on the last syllable, as Mr. Mix remarked, for euphony, — "Schoodic Lakes, Schoodic Lakes, Memphre*ma*— " They caught sight of Mr. Trent, and were so surprised at his presence there, of all places, that they never crossed the "gog" and reached shore, but with the cry "*ma*" on every lip went down. The effect was too ludicrous; all about the room bleats of "ma" went up as from a flock of unweaned lambs, while a shabby, graceless fellow, availing himself of the confusion, liberally peppered the hot stove.

Things were electric. Sneezes, from those of one syllable like a cat's, to those of five like a crowing chanticleer, exploded, mingled with plaintive cries of "ma," and the laughter of those who had nothing else to do. The school was hopelessly wrecked, and Mr. Mix insinuated that Mr. Trent seasoned the stove and broke up his class; but shingles neatly lettered appeared posted about the village the next morning and told another story.

"DROWNED,

Last night in Lake Memphremagog, Maine, all calling upon their mothers, 'The Burrampooter School.' The joys of this world come not unmixed."

Who fancies they did not have evening entertainments in Bodkins?

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Perhaps nothing will better illustrate the simplicity in that day of most things and some people than an allusion to Theophilus's outfit when he ventured from his home into the waiting West. I say "into" because, thus to express it, the trees were only "blazed," not felled, the great thoroughfares of McAdam and iron unmade, and, once out of sight, the sunset traveller was lost in time and distance. His trunk — "box," as it is quite English to call all baggage except an elephant's — was in fact a dovetailed wooden box with iron handles, painted a quiet stone-color, ornamented upon the top with an initial and a patronymic in sunflower yellow, "T. TRENT." The painter said the first name in full was too long for the box, — and at the ends "T. T." Among the contents were sturdy woollen socks and mittens of the bluest and whitest, a variegated comforter, linen that was mostly cotton, substantial outer garments, but second-hand, — for had he not seen them worn by his father's sheep? — all knit and shaped by loving hands before the old home fire.

The most remarkable object, however, was a satinet dress-coat, which, in spite of ridicule, he insisted upon; and Miss Greenway, visiting tailoress, who took snuff, and had an atmosphere of having been packed away a great while in a chest and forgotten, was summoned to make the bifurcated piece of apparel, the long swallow-tails being about as slender as rapiers, and almost pointed enough to be dangerous. Completed, he tried it on, but slightly disturbed

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by the shouts of laughter with which the family greeted his appearance. What with the collar rolled up snugly along the nape of his neck, like a short section of pipe from a hose-cart, he suggested a long, lean grasshopper erect upon his last legs and in repose. The coat was tenderly folded and consigned to a choice place in the box, a handkerchief ironed square and cologned in one pocket.

He meant to be married in that coat some day, but, alas! he never was. Hung in a closet at Bodkins, a boy discovered it, and grasping it cautiously by the scruff of the collar, as he would a captured rodent apt to bite, he exhibited it to the convulsed family with whom its owner boarded. Learning of this indignity, the proprietor took the amusing garment by the two tails and rent it from the two idle buttons behind even to the collar, and presented it thus dismembered to the hired girls, — neither servants nor domestics thereaway, — and thenceforth they flourished at the further end of a mop-stick and came to an ignoble end themselves.

To that box another curiosity was intrusted: a pair of dickeys — often figuratively worn by persons never suspected of any sort of falsification — covered with ruffles of linen lawn white as the gills of the fairest mushroom that ever put up an umbrella. Fancy a youth who kicked the beam at one hundred fifteen pounds, clad in that coat and blossoming out with ruffles, his pantaloons drawn tightly down by straps passing under the soles of his boots,

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giving him a jerky gait as of one walking on a tenacious pavement of asphalt softened by the hot sun, and you have a figure whose loss to comic artists is somewhat serious.

One Saturday afternoon Theophilus went on a pedestrian expedition. He had heard that Mr. Watkins, who lived eight miles away through the timber, had a seek-no-further tree of ripe apples. Now a "signifider," as most people called it, — but it does not signify, — was Theophilus's favorite tree in his father's little Eden. It was "the tree in the midst of the garden," and he would have needed no persuasion, either from an Eve or a devil, to eat the fruit whenever he could get it. That tree had more clubs lodged among its branches, more abrasions by moonlight climbers' heels and toes upon its body, than any other tree on the premises. A rusty-coated apple, but, like a rusty orange, of the choicest, it was one of the sweetest of his gastronomic memories. It is possible for a man to gain valuable thoughts for his brain by way of his stomach, as well as to lose some brains by robbers travelling the same route. The teacher thought Mr. Watkins might give him one of those apples, or leastwise sell it. More manly than his distant grandfather, he did not send a woman for it and then eat it himself. To him it would be like pansies, — "that 's for thought." What he would do with it he did not quite know; possibly cry over it; perhaps keep it until it sagged aside like a rich English cheese in sultry weather; surely not eat it,

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unless, possibly, he divided it into thin wedges of recollection and shared it with his fellow immigrants from "York State," and ate it standing and in silence as they drink toasts to the memory of the dead.

On his pomonic errand he was passing a cabin squatted by a brook, where an old woman was washing, and doubtful as to his way accosted her, "Will you tell a stranger the direct road to Mr. Watkins's place?"

"Never you moind that now," she said, wringing her hands out of the mottled soapsuds. "Everybody is neighbors in this country;" and Theophilus found it so to the day he bade Bodkins farewell. Did you halt at a strange door at mid-day for a glass of water? They might give it to you in a long-handled dipper, but it was bright as that same utensil in the celestial kitchen. Through the open door, the sun just gilding the noon-mark upon the threshold, you see the table, with its burden from spider, kettle, outdoor oven, and sleek, black teapot, and little columns of steam rising as from a group of young volcanoes rehearsing for a great act by and by.

Without a breath's hesitation, the man — but more likely the woman — says in a cordial way, "Won't you set by and eat some dinner? Perhaps you can put up with our fare if you are hungry;" and the family sit along, and Jenny waits, to make room for "the stranger within the gates." I said the woman more frequently gave the welcome. We read nothing of

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the airily-clad men of "the dark continent" bringing so much as a gourd of brackish water to Mungo Park. It was the women that ministered to him, and accompanied the service with rude song: "The poor white man lay under our tree, no sister to bring him milk, no wife to grind his corn."

No suspicious interrogation-points, like policemen in plain clothes, watching you from the eyes of the family that made you welcome; no detective questions; no proffering of a cold, clammy hand, edgewise like a fish's tail, when you proceeded on your journey, but a generous "good-day" disguised in "Call again if you come this way." Jenny picks you a sprig of mignonette; a fat-legged tottler offers you her home-made, battered doll, the bran oozing out of one inky eye, as a keepsake; the dog follows you to the gate, wagging his tail at every step, as if his walking mechanism were somehow worked with a lever; and you step lightly off, with a renewed respect for man and womankind, and an added consideration for yourself as belonging to the human species.

New countries make near neighbors. Yet there is no transforming charm in border-lands. If a man went West in bristles, he will never altogether forget *to root*. That he runs in the woods and eats mast may make him, as it does genuine pork, more transparent, but it will not render him quite acceptable to the Israelite.

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CHAPTER XI.

GOING OUT TO TEA.—VILLAGE BLUE BLOOD.—A HOMELY INTERIOR.

INVITATIONS to tea were dealt about like cards in a game of euchre, not inscribed upon ivory-faced parallelograms, but delivered by word of mouth, the messenger being a boy in a broad white calyx of clean collar, and his countenance polished off with a crash towel; or else it was a girl in pantalets — sometimes only in legs — and a starched calico frock that rattled, as she ran, like a piece of buckram, occasionally halting to say to a comrade in a way deliciously human, "My ma is going to have company, and yours *a-in't!*" Then, the instant the neighbor's door opened, she caught breath and began, "Ma 'd like to know if you 'll come over to my house Thursday and spen' the day." That "*my* house" is the girl and boy of it.

That meant mighty tea that would "bear up an egg," and wild-plum preserves, and grape "jell," and two kinds of cake, and custard-pie stamped off round the rim with a thumb for common, but a pitted thimble for company, and stewed chicken, and a fat short-cake with the double # mark of the maker slashed across the top of it.

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That meant bringing out the blue pagoda-pattern table-ware, and the genuine linen napery, spun and woven at home when "ma" was a girl. The silver was not much beyond spoons, with the mother's maiden initials on the handles, the forks were not tridents but bidents, the knife sometimes threatened the mouth of a visitor, and in many homes handkerchiefs took precedence of napkins.

That meant come early, and bring your knitting-work, and talk all together, and laugh in concert, and praise everything you tasted, and ask the hostess how she made this or that.

That meant the husbands should come also, along in the evening, each dangling a lantern if there was no moon, and sit around and talk weather, politics, pork, potatoes, and religion. Perhaps there would be singing, such as "Few Happy Matches" and "The Three Friends;" and then, toward nine o'clock, growing mellow, not with rum, but recollection of the homes down East they had left forever, they would all join, as well as they could, in "Auld Lang Syne." Then came such a hunting for workbags and calashes and capes, — the dressing-room being yet in the tree, — and they started out, a right friendly company, with a chorus of "good-nights." "Why, the stars are out," says one, and "There 's a halo round the moon," another; and away they flit, all sure to like their own homes best when they reach them. And the stars and the moon? The former are still shining, and there are yet halos around the moon.

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A few families, whose residences were set on the hill, held aloof from such people as went anywhere "to spend the day;" and they floated like oil upon the top of the cheap and watery puddles of society. To change the figure, they were the gold-band china variety from the great human pottery. When *they* gave a party, exotics of considerable color and some excellence were imported from the county-seat, while the majority of the Bodkins folk were decidedly *cut* flowers, — good enough for a funeral, but not good enough for a frolic. Singularly, perhaps, this neither provoked envy nor gave offence. They simply regarded it as a harmless weakness, and were sorry, rather than otherwise, for their high-headed neighbors whom the gold-plated check-reins of the artificial life they had elsewhere seen, if not shared, kept in such neck-wearying constraint. They would quite as soon envy a creature in a chronic state of being hanged.

They only said, "Our up-town neighbors put on mighty fine airs, but they are too sleazy wear in a world where bad weather may set in any day and frosts come early and late." Yes, there was one exception to this amiable mode of comment. Old Miss Saltonstall, who had an edged tool in the middle of her face, a thin horizontal dash beneath it, and a temper at large, remarked of their last party, "Well, I s'pose those folks on the hill had a diaper to about every plate."

There were interiors in the borders of Bodkins, Herkomer would delight to paint, whose quaint home-

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liness had a peculiar charm, — the open fire garnished with its sooty crane, pot-hooks, and trammels; the fox-nosed bellows hanging by its heels in a corner; the house-mother netting into her knitting-work many a care with the click of the needles, spinning flax on the little wheel into threads fair as the hair of the children; the children poring over the pictures in Fox's Book of Martyrs, the Family Bible, and Pilgrim's Progress, with an interest that never waned. There was a special charm in the illustrated story of the immortal tramp *en route* for the Celestial City, with its Great-Heart like one big highwayman and Valiant-for-Truth like another, and Mercy with *tic-douloureux* in one side of her face. The tall clock is backed up across a kitchen corner facing the family, a tarnished, bald-headed, baby-faced moon just showing on the dial, looking curiously like a certain platform speaker whom sturdy old John would have made perpetual concierge of Doubting Castle, if nothing worse; the "slice" and tongs leaning lazily against the chimney-jambs; the almanac hanging by an ear over the mantel; the cat boxing a little gourd about the floor, that on darning-days wears the holes in all the stocking-feet in turn to be darned over; a bulging camphor-bottle on the stand; a candle with a coffin in the wick beside it; hanks of red yarn against the wall.

The mother rolls up her knitting and stabs it with a needle, the father nodding with "Josephus" open in his lap, his corn-cob pipe fallen to the floor; he starts,

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shuts the slab-sided historian with a bang, turns over the slim fore-stick and gives it a kick with his toe — why ? — opens the door and looks out at the weather, says "Come, children," which scatters them like a spatter of musket-shot, winds the clock, that growls at him and then strikes, puts out the candle and the cat, stumbles over something that rolls away and drops an inch of candle out of its saw-toothed open mouth or its empty eyes, — the pumpkin bugaboo that stares unpleasantly through the fence at passers-by in cloudy nights. It will do so no more, for he opens the outside kitchen door and drops the brainless cranium into the swill-pail.

The shadows come out from far corners and play a silent bo-peep with the flickers of the fire. The father's boots stand square-heeled against the wall; and last, he who is about to simulate death turns sexton, digs an ashen grave, and buries the remains of back-stick and fore-stick wasted away with a burning fever, and pats the little mound with the shovel. Good-night!

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CHAPTER XII.

A PLEASANT PICTURE. — THEOPHILUS UNHARNESSING HIS HORSES FINDS A POLYGLOT. — "WHICH IS MR. BURNS?" — DR. ELIPHALET HOLMES.

BEFORE most of the homely incidents related in this chronicle had occurred, except the stolen address and the purchase of city property, we caught a glimpse of the schoolmaster, unmarried and fancy free, driving out of the woods on to a pleasant green not long before sunset of a September day, little dreaming that the very next September would smile upon his wedding tour. The purchaser of an admirable site in Columbia City, he was about to visit it, and then, observing the country and the people, meander his way home.

Halting at the gate of the nearest dwelling, it was a pretty picture he looked upon: a spacious building of hewn logs, a porch with seats each side the door, its slight supports half hidden by morning-glories; the scarlet leaves of a woodbine setting off the white-washed wall like a brilliant painting; sunflowers large as dinner-plates and high as the eaves standing at one corner of the house, turning their yellow-fringed mosaic discs to the West; at the other, a group of hollyhocks out of flower and passed into the green-

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cheese and button stage, — if you eat them, cheeses; but if you wear them, buttons.

Sprigs of live-forever were thriving in a cleft of the wall, and the young man wanted to jump immediately out and lovingly pinch one of them to hear it squeak; and that piped him back to checked-apron boyhood and the cheese-curd that complained between his teeth with a live-forever voice. A faintly purple smoke in a corner of the yard, as if fairies built a fire and charmed the smoke to stay, betrayed a smoke-tree. A filmy, crimson prince's feather had not quite lost its beauty; a few poppies had entered the crockery period and were loaded with scallop-covered green teacups, — a table-service growing like the apples of Hesperus; a tuft of ribbon-grass by the gate waited for little fingers to spool it; a pleasant fragrance and a suspicion of sage, and the delicate musk of a melon lying upon the porch, yellow as a gilded terrestrial globe, and, like it, ribbed off with meridians of longitude.

Yes, it was a pretty picture, rich in quietness, color, and perfume that delighted the young man's senses. He was quick as a cat to see things, and quick as a flash to associate them with other things distant and unlike.

He was just finishing his survey, when a pleasant woman, a Deborah and Dorcas in one, stood smiling at the door; and moreover she was a Methodist, as Theophilus knew by two infallible signs, — all such signs have failed now, — one of them being the severity

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with which she treated her handsome hair, sending it, like a naughty child to bed, straight behind her ears and out of sight, to mortify her vanity and shelter what is somewhere called "a crown of glory" from the stare of a wicked and wall-eyed world. The hair was rebellious in spite of her, for a carnal curl peeped out from behind the lobe of one ear, — and why not? God plainly meant that hair should curl and wave and be as beautiful as it could. The other sign was, that not a bit of bow or ribbon was visible at the throat or anywhere; but a spotless white kerchief was meekly crossed beneath her chin, and emblemed perfect purity as well as a lily or a dove could do, and composed itself like two white hands folded on the breast in perpetual prayer.

"Will you please tell me the distance to Columbia City?" And the woman with an amused smile replied, "You are in the heart of the metropolis!" The poor fellow looked bewildered; then said, as if every word had lead in its shoes, "Is there a tavern in this city?"

"Yes, right here," was the hearty answer, "and you can stay, and welcome. The Doctor — that's my husband; see his sign on the fence? — has gone across the mash, — if I should call it 'marsh,' half the folks would look as puzzled as they would if I should snap melon-seeds in their eyes to see a woman just bitten by a massasanger, — the hired man is mowing weeds, the boys gone after the cows, the girls blackberrying, — time they were back, too, — and that

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accounts for all the family but you and I and the dog;" and she laughed as merrily as a girl. "So you drive to the barn, slip the harness off, and give the ponies a lock of hay, against somebody comes to give them something solider."

Theophilus looked aghast. If unharnessing horses were taught in Homer or Horace or Kames's Elements, he might have mastered the situation; but he never did such a thing in his life. He set about it, however, with what lights he had, — but a liver would have done just as well for any illuminating purpose. But he buckled down to business, and tugged at every tongue. The bridles fell to pieces; there was no trace that the harness ever had any; the buckles lay about the floor with their tongues out; everything was resolved into strips and straps of leather, from bridles to cruppers; and when he came to the latter, he unbuckled them at arm's length with the tips of his fingers, gave a jerk and ran, and the ponies' heels followed in close order, and the ostler for an hour perspired with mortification and disgust. Then the collars would not come off. The heads had swelled, or the collars shrunk. He tried the buckles, but they were obdurate. He attempted to *back* the beasts out of them, and in his bewildered stupidity thought for an instant of trying to drive the ponies through them, and then gave a pitiful laugh at the absurdity of it. It was pull pony, pull Principal, — the one to get the horses and collars apart, and the other to get rid of Theophilus.

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He thought he saw that if the animals were upside down the collars would come off. He gave one more tug, but it was worse than a Greek root; he gave it up, and the ponies remained dressed like Otaheitans for a party. Last, like the orderly youth he was, he packed all the leathern fragments neatly in a two-bushel basket, fancied he had done well, and that there should be an addition to the table of Dry Measure, — one harness makes one bushel.

Now, was Theophilus an outright innocent? Was he entitled to take precedence, in the paradise of fools, of Jacob Jilletson, Esq., a Chicago millionnaire, to whom the strong-room doors of banks flew open, and whose signature, consisting of a corkscrew and a flourish, could draw cautious capital through the paying teller's window into his caressing hands?

There was a birthday celebration in honor of "Robert Burns, Poet." The procession was passing, and Mr. Jilletson stood upon the curbstone and watched it. Civic dignitaries, martial array, flags thorny with thistles, the stars and stripes, the Sons of St. Andrew, buglers and pipers and kilted Scotchmen in the plaid, their naked knees blushing with confusion and a Lake wind, people on foot that could not ride, people in carriages that would not walk, — on they moved, in loving recognition of the fact that a century before, somewhere across the world, not attended by any pomp, but only by a midwife, may be, "a brother man" was born one day who should sing what people only thought and never named, and felt and never

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told, and hoped but never whispered, made princesses of barefoot girls, a mouse's broken burrow more enduring than the memory of Abbotsford or Newstead Abbey, and grandly declared,

"A man 's a man for a' that."

Mr. Jilletson showed a sign of interest at last, and turning suddenly to a gentleman beside him, asked, "Which is Mr. Burns?" The gentleman regarded him suspiciously, and prudently moved away. With such competition, our young man would not have taken honorable rank among the simpletons.

Theophilus, having added another to the twelve labors of Hercules, stood listening to the eager ponies as they snorted away an insect tramp or two among the wisps, and ground the hay, thinking he would prefer being a cowboy with Hercules on the Island Erythia, and stealing cattle, to uncollaring horses, when a loud, hearty voice startled him: "If it is n't Mr. Trent!" and the owner, advancing, gave him a grip that brought him to the tips of his toes. "Perhaps you wonder how I recognize you. I heard you give that splendid address before the County Society at Four Corners, and it was about as good — I don't mean to flatter — as some of the best sermons of those famous old divines." Theophilus felt his face warm up like the wattles of offended turkeys; but the Doctor went easily on: "I 'm Dr. Eliphalet Holmes, and downright glad to welcome you here. Unharnessed, I see," looking round at the unencumbered wooden

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pins; "but where is the —" That instant he saw the big basket, Scripture measure, full of leather. He lifted out a strip, then a strap, then a crupper; and giving the contents a stir-up with his hand to make sure the run was as good as the sample, he burst into roars of laughter. A large, broad-breasted man, with plenty of room for what Aunt Sally Marvel called the "bellusses," he shook till the seals and keys hanging from his fob-chain jingled like a little fire-bell.

"I ask your pardon, my de—ha, ha, ha! — sir, but it is the absurdest — ho, ho! — thing I ever saw;" and he roared again. Hearing some one coming, he sobered in an instant; and bending toward the young man whispered, "Sh! sh!" as if anybody had been making a noise but himself. "It 's the boys — let me whisk the basket out of sight, because, you see —" footsteps nearer — "John," calling loudly, "go right back down to the spring and bring a pail of water. I'm as thirsty as a camel five days out; and you, Jem — ha, ha —"

"What are you laughing about, pa?" sounded a clear young voice.

"Never mind. You go to the henhouse and catch three nice chickens, and be sure they are not more than last spring's chick-*chick-chickens;*" and away he exploded again. The coast clear, he turned to Theophilus, who felt as much like a fool as he looked.

"I 'll come out with the lantern after the boys are abed and put — put —" an angry snort to keep the open

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vowels quiet — "put the harness to rights. You see, I mean the boys shall attend your school next winter, and I would n't have them know, for my best two-year-old, about this business; for boys don't understand, and they might infer — boys and girls are strong as draught horses in drawing inferences — that because you are not much of an ostler you may not be much of a teacher; but you and I know better. A teacher must have the respect of the elders, or the youngsters will fail to honor him also."

His silent hearer mentally resolved that Dr. Eliphalet Holmes should be made a member of the Bodkins High School Board, if not its president.

"Come, Mr. Trent, let us go in to supper. I always suspect a man who pretends to underrate 'creature comforts' does n't appreciate all the blessings he should be grateful for. I 'm a doctor, and a Methodist to boot, and my first profession teaches me what my last would n't, — that many a thing is charged to total depravity, when it 's only a foul stomach; and a bolus of blue mass followed up sharp with a big dose of castor-oil might be a good preparation sometimes for the sanctuary. Pills first, preaching afterward.

"Some of my brethren say I mix medicines up with religion too much; as if pink and senna, scammony and gamboge, blue mass and boneset, and all the rest of it, had anything to do with repentance of sin. Laughter should be numbered among sovereign remedies. You have done me good to-night, and deserve

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a fee beyond mere board and lodging. Voltaire says, though I seldom quote him when I can find anybody else to quote, 'Gravity,' by which I take it he means a sort of big-wig owlishness, 'is nothing but the mask of mediocrity;' *ergo* one of us has proved himself a very brilliant man to-night."

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CHAPTER XIII.

"WE 'LL ALL TAKE TEA." — A BOANERGES. — TABLE-TALK. — DRINKING FROM A SAUCER. — VULGARITY. — BYRON.

"COME in. Mother, this is Mr." — turning to his guest, "might I say *Brother?* — Trent, Principal of the Bodkins High School. Boys, this young gentleman will be your instructor next winter; and what he does not know, I 'm sure you don't need to learn, because — ha, ha! — you know it already." The Doctor could not forego a sly hint that neither harmed nor enlightened. "Mr. Trent, this is our daughter Sedate," turning to a girl with three smiles and a dimple on her bright face. "'Sedate' is a misnomer, but she was a stranger to us when we named her. The blunder is not irreparable, though, as she can change it any day and take her husband's name all through."

And here is what the young man saw: a smiling woman and two bright boys; a spotless white floor with a square island of carpet in the middle; a looking-glass surmounted by a picture of a blue ship upon a yellow sea, — some heirloom that had given back three generations of kindred faces and not retained a feature of them all; two peacock's feathers crossed

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like swords upon a hatchment; a fireplace plumed with red-berried asparagus; two silhouettes, black as the shadows about an electric light, upon the wall,— one of a man in a long queue, the other of a girl with her abundant hair, the color of her face, rolled in a great coil,—"what shadows we are!"—a pictured woman in a frame, beneath a willow that resembled an umbrella worn to the bones, her elbow resting on a tombstone whereon several names were written, each followed by an *obiit* and an *ætat;* a Dutchman of a desk supporting a bookcase filled with fat volumes smelling of drugs, as if they had been the first patients he practised upon; a pair of leathern saddle-bags on the floor in a corner, its pouches bulging like a successful chipmonk's after a forage,—saddle-bags that rode behind him through many weary nights and storms, flapping with the horse's gallop like the wings of a running ostrich; Windsor chairs sleek with paint and polish, chairs with bottoms of rush, list, and splint, cushioned in check and cushioned in red; crickets,—not the kind that skip and sing, but low stools for weary feet; a sallow clock ticking loudly in its corner, clucking home the last straggling minute of the closing day; a pair of bright candlesticks balancing the mantel; a lamp in a broad-brimmed paper hat, a perpetually upright Quaker, on the stand; a table against the wall; a picture of Jerusalem, and a map of Columbia City hanging above it,—all this is what the quick-eyed teacher saw.

"Please walk out to supper," said Sedate; and they

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filed out into a broad kitchen as neat, if not as fine, as a parlor. A small handful of fire smouldered upon the hearth, an iron teakettle hummed an even-song through its long and slender nose, and a table laden with "the creature comforts" welcomed them. The Doctor placing his hands on the back of his chair gave thanks standing, and the family stood likewise.

"Do you drink Old Hyson, Mr. Trent?" asked Mrs. Holmes; and the action began. "Take sugar and cream?" and she poured a spoonful as golden as the sands of Pactolus into the cup, and dropped after it two lumps of loaf-sugar with a pair of tongs shaped like sheep-shears, only they ended not in blades, but two long spoons. It was the sort of sugar that strikes fire, and is electric as a cat's back in the winter.

"I tell the Doctor," she said, "that we are rather extravagant in sugar; but he declares no other is fit to sweeten good tea, and poor tea deserves no sugar at all. I don't know but the Doctor is right; he 'most always is."

"Yes, Mr. Trent," he chimed in, "mother and I do work pretty well in double harness,—ha, ha!—We praise each other's faults all we can, and let the virtues speak for themselves. We are buckled — ho, ho!—for the whole route, and the harness — ha, ha! — does n't chafe an atom."

"Pa," cried both boys in concert, "what makes you laugh in such queer places to-night?"

Theophilus looked submissively up to the ceiling, as for rescue, and saw festoons of the reddest and

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greenest peppers in the world, looking like exaggerated precious stones, and —

"Mr. Trent, have another biscuit;" and the dangerous subject was dropped. Such passing of sliced ham, pink and tender, and mealy potatoes as ragged as beggars in their tattered white jackets! "The Doctor likes them so," she explained, "and says the touch of cold steel to a raw potato spoils it for anybody but pigs."

Now, the modern fashionable world has revolved back to the homely old method again. Tall, two-story biscuit, fragrant butter, plum preserves, snowballs of Dutch cheese, — the whole good cheer of the table flocking around the guest. It seemed a family conspiracy to feed one man, and he a stranger.

Mrs. Holmes, unfolding a fringed and fancy napkin, said, "You must take a little nibble of our daughter Jenny's wedding-cake, she that was married last June, and went almost to the end of the world to live, — Chicago. Of course you know the place; college-bred men are supposed to know everything."

"Almost," interrupted the Doctor, looking innocent and unconscious.

Mrs. Holmes did not mind him. "They say Chicago is on the border of missionary ground; that may do it some good. But don't be afraid of the cake; and maybe you'd better wrap a crumb of it up and put it under your pillow to dream on. You are not married, are you? I thought not; you are a long way too young."

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Theophilus at last had a minute to glance at the table. The crockery, with pale-blue Greek borders; the sturdy cups, as big as little bowls; the great platter, with a picture of George Washington in the centre, one eye concealed by a slice of ham (raw side-pork would be better for a black eye); the deep saucers, in which the cups were safe; the ebony-handled Britannia teapot, shaped like a mother hen upon her nest, — all gave the scene such a dear, old-world look as to render it almost classic.

Cheerful talk went round the table, like wine at grander feasts. Theophilus's story of his purchase in Columbia City contributed to the general amusement; and the Doctor said: "We 'll take that map out with us to-morrow morning, and if the stakes have not been pulled up, — this is a city of stakes, you see, and every purchaser being a martyr is furnished with a stake of his own, — I can show you the location of your real estate to a rod, if you remember your number. Those map-making gentry are sad rogues."

The schoolmaster inquired after an acquaintance of his who had opened a store in Columbia City. "*The* store," exclaimed the Doctor, "for there is but one, and just at present *that* is n't. You mean Brother Grover, — Galen Grover; he should have been a physician by the name of him. I 'm sorry, but he and Sister Grover have gone East for a visit. He 'd sold pretty much everything but ox-yokes, and as every creature around about with horns and a divided hoof that can pull, and old enough to obey orders and 'come

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under,' had already *gone* under, he thought he could not take a better time; and he will bring back a few goods when he comes. I am sorry for your sake, seeing you know him, that he is absent, but glad for my own —"

"Now, Doctor!" interrupted his wife, meanwhile making cautionary signals.

"Ah! but I shall. It's nothing against Brother Grover, but the fault is in the location of our house, — it's too near. You see, Mr. Trent, he is as good a man as lives, but he has voice enough for an entire Methodist class-meeting; and he used to go up into that loft of his over the store mornings, just at break of day, and engage in what he called, 'secret prayer;' but his fervor got the better of him, and warmed his words into inflated balloons, and he shouted like Boanerges, and woke up and disturbed half the village. At first people were alarmed, then amused, then distressed, then downright provoked. The blacksmith, who is not a professor, said that if the Being Grover addressed was such a thundering ways off, he'd better buy a speaking-trumpet, or move nearer. Things finally got so bad that I thought it my duty to speak to Brother Grover, as it was becoming a sort of scandal, and might bring reproach on the church; and so I spoke. He said he could not repress himself when he got a-going; and then I advised him to go somewhere else first, just before he began to go. 'Take a lantern,' I said, 'and go into that piece of woods west of town in good weather, and down cellar in bad.' He took it mildly and meekly, and went.

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"But somehow, either because of the echo in the woods, or simply because his voice had got bodily out-of-doors, it was louder and more startling than ever. His prayer seemed to have gone to pieces and to be drifting about, a sort of flood-wood, in the whole atmosphere. I had not told a soul of Galen's change of base, and people would scramble out of bed and listen at the door. At first, they thought violence was being used toward some one who was calling for help; and he was, but not on the neighbors."

"Eli-pha-let Holmes, what *will* Mr. Trent think!" said the watchful wife; but he kept right on. "Then they wondered who in nation was calling the cows at that unearthly hour; sometimes they thought it was some neighbor by the marsh crying fire, and got their pails to run and put it out. He probably did mention fire in his prayer, but laid too much *emphasis* on it, as I sometimes think they do now, but not in 'secret prayer,' so far as I know.

"When it was generally known what the disturbance really was, a rival storekeeper at Stone's Forks got up a sort of commission, signed and sealed with the largest wafer he could find, making Brother Grover town-crier. But it was of no use; he called it 'an invention of the enemy.' And so you see why I am glad he is gone, for it gives me a little chance to catch my early morning nap."

The conversation drifted away to Eastern ideas of Western life; and Theophilus said his were greatly modified regarding the rudeness and coarseness of the

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border West as it then was, and he had found quite as much of both in small hamlets in the East — and the smaller the more of both — as anywhere in the peninsula of Michigan.

Then the Doctor began what his wife denominated "one of his lectures." "There is," he said, "a certain refinement among many women of a new country that is not due in any sense to conventionalism or education, but born of true womanly souls, good hearts and active livers, — women not afraid of mice, drafts, and common people; who show at a glance the pattern of the piece; who do not waste their precious time, of which there is so little, while it might be made so much, with the imported frivolities and occupations of miscalled high life, summed up by somebody in *habille*, *babille*, and *dishabille*, — a base and pinchbeck counterfeit of 'the higher life.' Three ounces of zinc to every pound of copper will make it.

"I don't think people visiting poorer friends, and trying to eat rice with a two-tined iron fork to advertise the three-tined silver they left at home, is an evidence of good-breeding, but the contrary; neither do I think that because a man may carry a morsel to his mouth on a knife-blade, it is any proof that he is either ignorant or vulgar. An English duchess, who was counted a gay and fashionable butterfly, once said in a sensible moment, 'Vulgarity is setting store by the things that are seen;' but she may have done it on the principle that — that — what *is* it, mother? You studied Latin two years with Dominie Clinton, and

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mine is rusty. I mean that passage about approving the good and — "

"Oh," she answered, "you mean *Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor;* but anybody might blunder upon it in a dictionary of quotations, and not know enough to know he talks Latin when he calls the cows."

The Doctor resumed: "That there were traces of vulgarity in Lord Byron's character is proved by two things, — when he showed anything new he had purchased, from a bedstead to a breastpin, to his friends, he was sure to tie a little tag to it, giving the cost price; and he wrote 'Don Ju-an.'"

"Don Wan, Doctor; Don Wan," said his wife with a laugh.

"By the way," he proceeded, "granting Byron the possession of genius, as about everybody does grant, how will Sir Charles Morgan's definition of genius fit his lordship? 'Genius,' he said, 'is a morbid determination to the head.' And yet, I don't know. There 's good to be got from almost everything; as Elder Burns said, 'The Devil has wonderful persistence; I wish all Christians had more of it.' It is n't wise nor safe to mow down grain enough for a bundle, to behead a handful of thistles. I don't cut a man's head off to cure his ear-ache.

"You remember that joke — if that 's the name for it — on the Presiding Elder last spring, mother. You see, Mr. Trent, the Elder preached a powerful sermon, in which he denounced pernicious literature, and said

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it was all the more dangerous when it was brilliant. He was particularly severe upon Byron, but presently forgot him in a nobler theme, and concluded by extolling the bliss and purity of heaven, closing very feelingly and effectively with, —

'How welcome those untrodden spheres!
How sweet this very hour to die!
To soar from earth, and find all fears
Lost in thy light, eternity!'

After dinner, at Brother Meacham's, a brisk young lady of the household came into the room with a little old book open in her hand. By the look of it, somebody had attempted to get through it by nibbling at the corners, cover and all. The girl marched up to the Elder, brave as Cæsar, and handed him the book, with her finger on a stanza. He took it and read the lines he had quoted, turned to the titlepage and saw, 'Hebrew Melodies. By Lord Byron.' A flush of what spermaceti people call 'rude health' spread over his face as he returned the book, saying, 'You have convicted me, my daughter, of inconsistency. Verily, "consistency *is* a jewel."' He smiled, and she vanished."

Theophilus was a good listener, — a rare quality among many young men just now, — and so he was glad when the Doctor resumed: "Speaking of table manners, a man in what is called cultivated society, — that's what a kitchen-garden is, if well tended, — who within the last five years has dared to pour tea into a saucer instead of scalding his tongue to a blister,

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would n't have feared, had he been there, to say, 'Leave the door open a minute, keeper; I 'm going in with Daniel among the lions!' Such twitching of mouth-corners and surprised eyebrows at the clown or the ignoramus — they are too astonished to classify him — as there would be, to be sure! It is only six or seven years since the cup-plates in stylish places were thrown aside, and people began to be invited to a social scald.

"What a pity the author of the Declaration of Independence was a clown! Presiding at a table of distinguished guests, the conversation turned upon the relations between the Senate and the House of Representatives; and Mr. Jefferson, pouring his hot tea into the saucer, said, 'Thus it is: cup and saucer, the Senate and the House; matters pass from one to the other to *cool*.'"

The clock gave a little groan, the Doctor drew forth a large watch with an open countenance — how many fluttering pulses that watch had timed, how many birth-moments noted! "Why, it is going on ten, and you must be tired with your journey, my talk, and your — ah! — *efforts*. John, bring the stand."

It was brought, the big Bible upon it, and the Doctor read the Hundredth Psalm, beginning, "Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands," and the fifth verse closed the chapter. Then they knelt, and the Doctor's prayer was uttered, not with the voice of "a hired man," but with a quiet reverence, as a son asking gifts from his father. He prayed for the

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afflicted, that they might be relieved; the poor, that they might be supplied; the proud, that they might be humbled; all mankind, that they might be blessed; and a breath of petition for "Thy young servant who is with us to-night; strengthen him in every good word and work, and bless him evermore."

And they all sang in sweet accord, as were their hearts and lives and faiths, —

"When I can read my title clear
To mansions in the skies."

"Good-night" and "good-night," and the boys went to bed without a candle. The Doctor lighted the lantern, looked at Theophilus with a significant smile and a "good-night" and went out; while Mrs. Holmes, with a tall mould-candle set in a shining brass candlestick as in a shrine, led Theophilus to the neat little guest-chamber, all in white like a little bride, window-curtains, valance, lamp-stand, — all except the blue-and-white coverlet, spun, designed, and woven in the old homestead among the Green Mountains. Peace folded its white wings above the roof-tree, and sleep fell upon the dear home in the West like "the shadow of a great Rock in a weary land."

Beside that humble threshold grew the perennial plant Hospitality, clustered with the tartan-tinted blossoms of "a Highland welcome," and radiant with the fairer flowers of Christian kindness. It is not of those to which Milton's Eve made farewell lament in Eden; for it was made to glorify and bless the homes of the wider world.

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CHAPTER XIV.

WAKING UP. — LOOKING FOR CITY PROPERTY. — DESCRIPTION OF THE SCENERY. — BUSINESS IS BUSINESS. — LABOR MOVEMENTS. — ENVIRONMENT. — A FAREWELL.

WHAT a delight to rise from dreamless sleep to see the resurrection of a new day! Some people wake by sections, but Theophilus all at once and all over. His ears alert, his nose on duty, he threw up the curtains of his eyes to the glory of the world as fresh and young as when God said "Light be, and light was." The "What cheer oh!" from the master of the feathered harem, the morning whinny of the stabled horses at approaching footsteps, the sheep saying their vowel sounds together, the proclamation of an early-minded hen of an improbable chicken more, the chattering caucuses of birds bound South to-morrow, and, sweeter than all the rest, the music of human voices, brought him to his feet. The aroma of Java crept in at a crevice of his door, and the sizzling consonants of frying chickens in the big spider along with it. It was like the order, "Boots and saddles!" for in an instant he was hopping about the room in one boot and tugging at the straps of the other, apparently

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trying to hold himself in as with a bridle, but really struggling to get the stubborn leather on. Theophilus's feet were always too large for his boots.

So Theophilus was a minute late, the breakfast bountiful and speedily despatched, and the Doctor, putting the roll of map under his arm, said: "Now, Mr. Trent, we will look up your city property." They walked across the pleasant green, by several log-houses, round an aggressive mud-hole, under a clump of wild plum-trees scarred by sticks and stones, knee-deep through a settlement of jimson-weed, into a little huddle of scrub-oaks, along a tangle of saucy blackberry-bushes that caught them by the coat-skirts, over fallen trees, until they found a stake. "Here," said the Doctor, deciphering some half-legible lettering, and consulting the map, — "here is the southeast corner of the public square; over yonder, where that ox is blessing the Duke of Argyle, or somebody, as he scratches his neck upon the roots of that upturned tree, is the fountain.

"Now, for the next stake; it must be at the angle of your lot. Face due north and pace sixty-six feet, — one, two, three, march!" — and away they went. "Halt!" cried Theophilus; but no stake was visible. The Doctor, bustling about, rushed up to an old cotton-wood, shouting, "I've found it; it's this tree, and here is a piece chipped out. It was soft wood and chipped out easily, like those that chipped in."

Sumach-bushes stood round about, blushing furiously, as if ashamed of such rascality. "Here, Mr.

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Trent, is your real estate, sixty-six by a hundred, and the post-office just round the corner in a hollow tree, and —" A monstrous hog, with a grunt like the growl of a bear, scrambled up and plunged out of the thicket, eight little white pigs streaming after like the twisted papers in the tail of a kite.

"Occupied, you see," laughed the Doctor. "Your tenant has a large family; but you have an advantage over most landlords."

"As how?" and Theophilus looked as if something disagreed with him.

"Why, if they fall in arrears, you can *kill* and *eat* one of your tenants; and such a family properly salted would last another family a couple of years. After all, nothing is so bad that it could n't be worse. See how much better it is to board *on* such tenants than to board *with* them. And there 's the *bristles!*" he exclaimed, with a flourish of the map; "you can furnish all the Crispins in the country with waxed-ends; and then think! there 's the *t-a-i-l-s*," drawing out the word like a prehensile monkey's best hold; "think of the happy children, each with a roasted tail in his teeth, and what they don't eat they can make whistles of, and prove Poor Richard blundered. There always is a solid satisfaction in discovering little flaws in our betters. People say far more about the sun's spots than they do about the sun."

"Oh!" he added, looking sympathetically benevolent, "you can give the plucks to the poor."

Theophilus heard this fusilade of small arms, his

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face frescoed with parti-colored emotions as if he had washed it in a rainbow and forgotten to wipe it.

"Come, let us sit down on that log and be serious. You paid one hundred dollars for this lot; it's tuition money, and not a cent too much if you make the best of it. You are young, and, I apprehend, know little of what men call business methods. One third of the world is vigorously striving to get something for nothing from the remaining two thirds; or at least, not to put it too strongly, to get a very great deal for a very small little. There'll come a time in this country, though we may not see it, when men will want to dock the day at one end, perhaps both, and then compensate the losers for taking heavy toll out of their time by asking a little more for what is left, on the principle that the less there is of time or anything else on the market, the more it is worth. Logic. It is of a piece with Charles Lamb's whimsical excuse for reaching his desk in the India House very late in the morning. 'But then, you see,' he said, 'I g-go home very early in the afternoon.' More logic.

"And they will probably call their organized effort — for it will come to that — 'a movement,' when they should have christened it a displacement; and then they may be likely to think that, as they have the work and their employers the money to pay for it, it would be a good thing to have the capital handy, and 'remove the deposits' from the vaults of the few to the jackets of the many, so when they finish a

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day's work they can put their hands in their own pockets and pay themselves quite convenient.

"Another advantage: there not being capital enough in any one place to do anything except live like the rest of the animals, the year would be rich in holidays. But when the rivers stopped running the wheels would stop turning, and then the imaginary monster, Monopoly, must needs reappear, 'and their last condition would be worse than the first.'

"Here is a builder; he has means. Here are ten men with skill and muscle. They can work; he can pay. Here are the hewn bones of a big barn strowing the ground. Now, is he a monopolist, the man who does not lift a pound, but balances himself like a rope-walker on the heavy plate for the rafters to put their feet on by and by, cries 'Heave, ho, he!' and swings an idle hammer or an empty hand, while the unhappy ten with pike-pole and shoulder sway up the great 'bent,' the men's bare arms swelling with muscle till they look like braided cordage,— lifting and lifting the solid timber and the solid builder as well?

"Suppose those ten men should conspire, and suffer the ponderous frame to come crashing to the ground, dashing their oppressor to death; they would lose their wages, be out of a job and a supper as well, and awaken a howl of execration against the man they killed. Or suppose those ten men, eschewing murder that shows red and blinds the eyes, should force the master-builder to divide his capital with them; I

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warrant you few more barns would go up in that region, and cattle would ruminate the winter out under the lee of straw-stacks. Nobody yet has been found strong enough to lift himself over the fence by the straps of his boots.

"Then, by the last logical achievement, 'United we stand, divided we fall,' reads 'United we fall, divided we stand.' Samson could not talk the Philistines to death, so he kept his tongue quiet and let the jawbone of an ass do the business; but fortunately for the Philistines, there are more jawbones than there are Samsons.

"But it is time to pull up. I have rambled off into what may be a region of improbable possibilities. Let us hope so. Do you think it is much of a compliment to say of a man, 'He minds his own business'? I don't. It may disguise selfishness, illiberality, and indifference. Shylock minded his own business, — the only man in this county who should have been named for him is Elkanah Flint. His conscience is a deaf-mute; and as for his heart, it seems a pebble hard enough to crack a walnut. He is as thrifty as a successful robber, but he always goes according to what is set down in the bond. What a pity law is not always equity! He has earned his reward, and they call him 'Old bowlder,' with a small 'b.'

"I have noticed that when men are about to do a particularly hard, cruel thing, they generally announce it in an offensively virtuous, incisive way, — 'Business is business,' — and proceed straightway to

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execution. I am proud to say that the overwhelming majority of Michigan people I know, have no such war-cry; but the rather, 'Not looking each to his own things, but each also to the things of others.' Such people turn a bright side to the world and a true side to Heaven.

"But I never found it much of a tax to love my neighbors here in Michigan, for they are quite all neighborly themselves. Whether they were so where they came from, or whether the new air, water, and surroundings of the wilderness have improved them, is a question; but you may drive tough-mutton sheep from old Eastern pastures to the unfenced fields and wild grasses of the West, and after a while no juicy Southdowns ever carry much finer mutton in their woolen blankets than the immigrant sheep can."

The Doctor mused a minute and picked a leaf from a plant growing at his feet, saying, "How curiously all things get fitted to their environment. Here now, this leaf covered with a fuzz of finest wool is not afraid of frosts. It is mid-September, and the plant is not ten days old, but in its winter clothes it can defy a snow-drift. Dig for it in December, and you will find the leaves alive and hearty. You have seen dried specimens of the edelweiss, the most ambitious of Alpine flowers, that buds and blossoms in perpetual snow, its white leaves covered with a nap that keeps it warm; but transplant it six or eight thousand feet nearer the sea-level, and in a few

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generations it will lay aside its winter wear, and assume, so to speak, a summer overcoat and do its best to make a live of it.

"I notice, Mr. Trent, that you say *Mich*igan. Don't. To be sure, there are all sorts of authority for it; but *don't*. Whether the word really means 'Land of the Lakes,' at any rate the Indians made it, and they have an undoubted right to do their own pronouncing, and I have heard them a hundred times say Michi*gan*. There is more of it that way, and it has a grander sound, more befitting the splendid thing it names. I have a fancy that some fellow afraid of being called a Michi*gander*, if the old accent was retained, suggested the change, and made a goose of himself at last. But it *would* knot up a man's tongue to say *Mich*-ig-nder, would n't it?

"Well, well, bid your city property good-by; I 'm sorry, but if you are bound to go this morning and make thirty miles before dark, you must be moving. I won't argue, for I think it is as bad manners not to 'speed the parting guest' as it is to give him a freezing welcome."

And then they walked slowly back in the shorn sunshine flickering with brown-winged seeds and the thistles' shining parachutes. The ponies, refreshed and reapparelled, every buckle-tongue on duty, were waiting at the gate.

"You make quite a tour before returning to Bodkins, and through a country where the little oak openings are riding on the swells of the land like so many

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orchards drifting out to sea, small lakes twinkling here and there, occasional glimpses of deer trooping across the open spaces.

"'Farms?' Yes, clearings along, just enough to prevent your thinking you are the first man to discover the country, and log nests in the midst of them with flax growing around the doors."

"'Flax?'"

"Yes, two-legged flax, with the tow combed out at the top. And you 'll hear something, too, — the axes of the choppers, ticking like clocks and death-watches the coming civilization and the departing wilderness. That last sentence I stole" — one of Theophilus's ears burned — "stole from an address I gave before the Medical Society last year" — the ear cooled down. "For my part, I like these rolling Michigan landscapes better than the flat prairies of Illinois. The latter make me feel lonesome, as if the whole earth was done off in one vast, unfurnished room with nothing in it but a carpet, where you keep moving all day, and nothing to be surprised at so much as that there is nothing to surprise you. 'It 's a far cry to Lucknow.' But a generation more, and those prairies will present another and a grander picture, and they will look as if the earth were trodden level by the human multitudes."

Just here Mrs. Holmes came out with a package pinned in a piece of blue check. "I 've put you up a bite, — a nutcake or two, a chicken leg and wing, and a couple of what you call my two-story

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biscuit. Perhaps it will taste good before you get anywhere."

The Doctor broke in: "You will see more of the country if you return to Bodkins by way of Green's Corners and Canaan. Good-by, my dear young man," with a strong grasp of the hand, — "good-by, and may we all meet in the other Canaan by and by;" and then, with a voice sweet and mellow as a Harvest Bough apple, — a voice that at many a camp-meeting had led off the surge of melody beneath the arches of the woods, — he sang, —

> "Oh, could we make our doubts remove, —
> Those gloomy doubts that rise,
> And see the Canaan that we love
> With unbeclouded eyes."

"Good-by, Mr. Trent," said mother, daughter, and sons; and another last word from the Doctor as Theophilus struck out, "You 'll be in good company all day," — the young man looked round inquiringly, — "take care of it; which means, take care of yourself."

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CHAPTER XV.

IN THE WOODS. — A FREE BANQUET. — THE SCHOOLMASTER IS LOST AND FOUND. — A CABIN WELCOME AND INTERIOR.

THUS one brief chapter in the young man's life had ended, and he was already turning the leaf to another. Life calls few halts along the way. Either we keep right on as we began, or we read backward like the Hebrews. The air was full of subdued sounds of Nature about to rest. The crickets sang louder because the world was emptier. He heard the faint click of axes, but there was no one visible. He saw two pretty trees with their arms thrown over each other's shoulders, and fancied them lignified dryads. He smelled the wild mint, and was not quite certain but he tasted it in the air.

The world about him was very friendly. Everything beckoned him,

> "And a bird overhead sang Follow!
> And a bird to the right sang Here!"

Theophilus heard the purling of a stream, and the ponies stopped unbidden. Looking down into the water he saw fishes a finger long, lying like so many magnetic needles and poising in the water. They suggested the lunch as distinctly as if they had

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spoken of it. He unpinned the package, crumbled a nutcake and tossed it in a little shower like manna upon the water. Not a fish. The shadow frightened them, but the substance not at all. A second, and the infant school reappeared, a nose to every crumb, and the lucky flotsam disappeared.

Little brown birds sitting in rows upon the bare limbs of a low tree mentioned lunch; their two slender notes sounded to him like bis-*keet*, bis-*keet*, and a two-story biscuit sowed the land, and the birds came down to it with a wrangling alacrity that spoke well for their appetites, ill for their manners. A stray hunting-dog dashed down into the water, lapped with the noise of a swift paddle, looked up, sneezed, and gave a friendly bark. This was enough. The chicken leg and wing described the same arc as the breadstuffs, and the sound of the craunched bones was as pleasant to the young man as it was to the dog. The last biscuit followed the chicken at two gulps. Theophilus folded the cloth and put it in his pocket, seemingly refreshed as if he had eaten the dainty lunch himself. He drew out his watch. "Bless me!" he exclaimed; "two o'clock!" whipped up the ponies and hurried on. He looked behind, and the hound was hurrying after. The dog had found a friend and the man had made one. Not a soul to be saved had he seen.

No more loitering. He sighed for somebody that could sigh too. Genuine sighing is exclusively a human talent, save when the poets generously attri-

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bute it to an ox after a long and unusually intemperate drink, a key-hole, a house-corner, or an old chimney in a windy night. Dashing over a ridge, he heard an axe and saw the swinger. The man had felled a great tree and was trimming off the branches. The top of the stump was about as flat as a table, and upon it lay some slices of cold pork and a hunch of bread, plainly left over from his mid-day meal. Theophilus was too hungry to be formal. Seeing other creatures eat did not "stay by him" as well as if he had taken dinner himself.

He said "Good-day," and the chopper said "Day."

"Will you sell what is left of your dinner?"

"*Se-el!*" — he broke the word in two and spit it out a dissyllable — "not if I know myself. You 're a sight welcomer to it than the pesky squir'l that 's stealin' it. Will you light?" And he lit, despatched the pork and bread with unseemly haste and appetite, asked the distance to his proposed stopping-place, and drove away.

Beautiful as Michigan scenery is, there is sometimes, but never in the northern part, a monotony of loveliness. A bit of picturesqueness, even the grotesque now and then, would be a relief. California has trees that are mountebanks, and vegetable monkeys that give the traveller a keener relish for the floral grace of that country. Theophilus began to notice this sameness in things as he whirled rapidly along. Trees had a familiar look. A stream he rattled over seemed strangely like the one where

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he gave a little banquet to a few of his fellow-creatures. He got a glimpse of another woodman through a fallen tree-top, but he had no time to talk. The sunshine slanted and reddened. The shadows that had been packed all day around the roots of trees, or hidden in the bushes, were mysteriously unrolling, as if Night's handmaids were arranging her shake-down.

Suddenly the horses shied, and Theophilus saw a man partly concealed by a tree, an axe on his shoulder. The ponies dashed by, and the driver was very willing they should. A voice brought him up with a jerk —

"Look a-here, Stranger, this is three times you've passed this neck o' woods. You must a-gone more 'n twelve mild, an' it 'pears like now it 's nip and tuck twixt you and pitch dark. Them 's *wood* roads you've ben circusin' in, and don't go nowhars to speak of, 'cept wood-piles and sich."

Theophilus's face beaded all over with cold sweat like an ice-pitcher in dog-days. The man went on: "My shanty 's 'cross the gully 'bout'n three mild, an' thar 's no gittin' thar 'cept a-foot, but I 'll set ye right 's a trivet. Jes p'int them ponies' noses at ev'ry right-han' road that makes a square corner tell you come to a big mash, then foller the lef' han' track, an' it 'll bring you out to the Detroit road."

Theophilus thanked him in a feeble way, flicked the ponies, and was off. He had made a bobbin of

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himself, and now was to unwind if he could. The track had but one side for him, and he spun round every right-hand corner like a top.

The low-sinking sun lodged a couple of minutes in the tops of the bushes, then slipped down and paid the last instalment of the day in gold bars scattered on the ground; but Night soon gathered them up in the folds of her mourning, and Theophilus was a bankrupt. There were twinkles of light, bewildering, disappointing, and uncertain. The world about him grew nearer, more intimate and intrusive. Designing trees gathered in close groups along the road. The open spaces were filled up as with a black tide. The road was washed away. A night-bird with a plaintive cry flew close over his head with muffled wing, that it might come upon its quarry unawares. Everything about him suggested stealth and secrecy. The whole world to Theophilus's fancy fairly *lurked.*

He pulled the horses down to a walk; a lively pace was no longer safe. He almost *felt* for the next turn, but none came. Away to the left a fox barked, and the hound without a cry plunged through the bushes and was gone. His sole wilderness friend had deserted him. Even the katydid's creaking dispute was a relief. The team came to a sudden halt. He jumped out of the carriage to find a great log across the track. Track? He knelt and felt with his hands. There *was* no track. He had lost his way! He had lost *himself!* He groped in every direction without avail.

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His mouth seemed roofed with a corn-husk. He licked the balls of his dry fingers, first one hand then the other, and listened. He heard a distant pump creak, but knew it was nothing but the wind swaying a dry limb. He saw for an instant a pair of luminous eyes of an unwholesome hue. Things mocked him.

To be lost is losing one's identity. One percussion match would have kindled the dead leaves and limbs, and he might have ridden away as by the light of a torch; but the world was twenty years too slow, with its wooden toothpicks and its touchy matches. He was blotted out from all human knowledge as with a drop of ink, and it was a marvellous comfort to believe that one Eye never lost sight of him, for the God of sparrows was also his God.

Looking over his shoulder he was startled. Within a rod of him were spots and splinters of pale fire. At first he thought it an illusion, but drawing a step nearer he found it was a decaying stump decorated with fox-fire, — a cheap and rather useless element shedding neither light nor heat. But beyond, he saw three or four dim and sinister-looking lanterns flickering about, as borne by invisible figures looking for something. He knew them for what they were, Wills-of-the-wisp and Jacks-of-the-lantern, that assured him, as by a pleasant word, that he was on the border of the marsh the woodman named, and so not far from the thoroughfare. And then it was cheering, because it helped him think of himself as being *some*where

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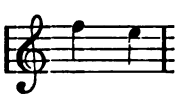
and not *any*where. There is a difference. But he was helpless as ever. At last — why not think of it before? — he gave a succession of shrill cries in two notes, and listened. Even then in a bewildered way he wondered whether he shrieked in F sharp like a mountain yodel, or in "G above the staff." If that fox-fire had given as much light as a lightning-bug, he would have pencilled his idea on the spot, thus:



Theophilus was not a cool man, only clammy; not himself, but some one else with the same name.

A long quavering *hul-lo-a* answered his shout from a point apparently very near. As Theophilus replied, an animal dashed up with a bark of recognition. It was the hound he had befriended. He would hardly have been more surprised had the little fish he fed presented themselves on a platter nicely browned for his supper. The dog ran off a few steps, barked, and returned. The young man understood what he said, tied the ponies to a sapling, and followed until he bumped against a fence.

He never knew before what a lovable human thing a rude rail-fence is. It meant neighborhood, a two-footed fellow-creature, and assistance. Climbing it, he crashed into a yielding undergrowth as dense as a cane-brake, that bent and broke under his feet. In a minute a four-paned window bright with firelight shining through greeted him. It was like a pleasant smile. A generation after, he read with his spectacled old eyes by an electric light with a fierce glare

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that suggested a human eye without lid or lashes, but it was nothing so brilliant as that small cabin window.

"Who comes thar smashin' through my sowed corn like a b'ar?" was the first salutation.

"A friend in trouble;" and Theophilus came into the broad flare of light streaming from the opening cabin-door whence two well-grown barefoot girls scudded out.

"You've come to the spot, Kunnel," — that title showed the Missouri strain, — "whar trouble's a toler'ble sure crop most o' times;" and the speaker, who with the instinct of a frontiersman had stood in shadow while he scanned the intruder, came into the light. A long-flanked, gray-eyed man in russet-colored overalls, reinforced at the knee with two square blue jean patches, caught up with one yarn suspender, one leg of the garment at a half-reef wrinkled round the top of the boot, his hair like a tangled mane, a wisp of it sprouting though a hole in his hat, the beard shaven from a face as sharply-defined and bony as a racer's head, his throat encircled with a hairy ruff gray about the hinges of the jaws but dusty black upon his head, due, perhaps, to greater industry with grinders than brains, — altogether, not a bad man to look at, but awkward to encounter, mad all over when "riled," as he said himself, and a dead shot with a rifle.

"Can you give me quarters for the night, — me and my ponies? I will pay well for the kindness."

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For reply, the man said, "My dog knows you — whar'd you git 'quainted?" with a slight tone of suspicion. But no sooner had the young man told the story of the feast, than the settler spoke out with hearty readiness; "Yis, Kunnel, anythin' is your'n thet's our'n in the way of grub and sleepin', but 't won't be much, 'pears things's 'bout gin out; old mooley's 'most gone dry, hain't killed hogs, the skunks and foxes finished the chickings, and I can't git to mill cos bridge's turned inter flood-wood in the fresh we hed. Jerusha — thet's my youngest gal — tumbled head fust into the pork-bar'll trying to reach a chunk, and when she come up she 'lowed there wuz three chunks left, brine all leaked out; but ef you k'n stan' it we k'n. Less go for the hosses. Matilda Ann, bring the lantern."

So the ill-matched couple set off, one with long pantherine strides that kept the other ticking two for his every one. The ponies were stabled and munching, and the two men were just entering the cabin, two dogs also, while a gray cat with a curvature of the spine met them at the door, gave a spiteful spit, and scampered up a tree. The host stopped and asked, "What mought your name be when you're to hum?"

Theophilus gave him a brief biography thus: "Trent, teacher at Bodkins."

"Old woman, this is Kunnel Trent, schulemaster at Bodkins. He throwed away a chicking dinner on old Spicer to-day, and went 's empty ez a b'ar 'n the

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spring the hull livin' time. One good turn desarves 'nother, but you can't sarve him as he did the pup. I jes telled him we hain't nothin'." The old woman dropped a rag-bag whose odds and ends she was sorting, — rags that must have flourished in a very dry country, — and gave Theophilus a hand rough and hard as a claw with much drudgery.

"Law suz, yis we ken! There 's taters an' squash an' pork an' punkin, but there ain't no tea 'cept sassafrax with maple-sugar sweet'nin'; the meal 's sourer 'n swill, but mebby I kin scrape the flour-bar'll agin." And she bustled about on hospitable thoughts intent.

There was a blazing fire on the hearth, and a young pumpkin with a bit of unlighted candle stuck in it served as a candlestick. The table was cross-legged (X), and so were the stools (X X X). There was a low sag-bottomed chair cushioned with a sheepskin, the tail hanging down behind like Bopeep's sheep's, and when the chair swung the tail swung also, and the chair squeaked as if there were mice under the rockers. There were a large faded red chest of drawers, three beds in a row, and a triangular fragment of looking-glass fastened to the wall. A fiddle hung from a wooden peg by its awkward neck, clasping the bow to its bosom. It was a house of a single room, save a cubby-hole of a lean-to; no more partitions than there were in the Garden of Eden. This architectural defect bore on Theophilus's mind with a weight that made his face flush. A gaudy picture graced the wall, of a young woman whose dress at

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the top fell short of — propriety, and her hair was pasted upon each side of her face like a hand-breadth of black court-plaster. Communicative Jerusha said it was the "Belly of Alabama." Theophilus, feeling the need of a translation, stepped to the picture and read: "The Belle of Alabama."

A rifle hung "trail-arms" on wooden hooks over the fireplace, a powder-horn knobbed with brass nails round the bottom was slung up behind the door, and there were three books on a shelf, which the schoolmaster took up one after another, — Dream-Book, Song-Book, Bible; and if the first two were swarthy as Turks with much thumbing, the last showed evidence of once-a-week consultation. The youth knew it from the sleek razor-strap look of the leathern cover.

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CHAPTER XVI.

MATILDA ANN AND JERUSHA. — SUPPER, MUSIC, AND DANCING. — HUNTING STORIES. — RETIRING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

THE young man wished to wash. "*Jerush'! Jerush`!*" — two inflections and one emphasis — screamed the mother.

"Marm?" burst in at the door, and the speaker after it.

"You rense the skillet, — no, the spider, skillet's hed inyuns in 't, the spider nothin' but taters, — the Kunnel wants ter wash."

The girl seized the spider much as if she had a runaway kitten by the tail, and whisked it away from a gossip with a poor old bake-kettle, a few dead coals and ashes scattered upon its thick-skulled cover, brought the water and a little gourd of soft-soap, apologetically thus: —

"Cake-soap 's gone — smelt good, and Matilda Ann she used the last on her hair when she went ter the shows with Bill Pollock."

"You keep still," exclaimed Matilda Ann, catching the last word; "bits of girls like you should be seen, not hearn."

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"You 're allus tellin' 'bout bein' seventeen. It was nothing but 'n accident; Maw says so. It might 'a' ben me jes as well."

"Now you have made a show o' yerself, yer 'd better bring the Kunnel a tow'l." This with considerable dignity.

"I 'll make 'nother show," retorted Jerusha, who was just at "the hateful age," and in a provoking sing-song, "I k'n do what *you* can't, anyway;" and she whirled about like a top, until her scanty skirt ballooned, and down she squatted, — a big, round calico cheese with the girl's saucy head on the top of it. The towel came apologetically also: "Hain't washed in two week; poundin'-barr'l tumbled to bits in the hot sun, and Paw took the pounder to drive stakes, and the hogs tore up 't other tow'l. Mebby you k'n find a gray spot, and that 'll be clean." As Jerusha presented her shoulder-blades, Theophilus wriggled one hand, then the other, in the pocket with his handkerchief.

"Drat the cat!" sounded Maw's voice from the lean-to. "Matilda Ann, how *did* the cat git inter the flour-barr'l?" Then there was a scraping of the sort that sets the children's teeth on edge, and the hospitable woman came in with quite a saucerful of flour, and said genially, "I kin make you a cake, Kunnel, arter all." Theophilus smiled as infants do when fanciful mothers say they hear an angel whisper, — his stomach turned over like a tired man in his sleep, — but he smiled pitifully.

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"Go to the stub, Matilda Ann, and bring the pork, an' be sure you button the stub door. I see yesterday thet it wabbled."

Theophilus must learn before he died what "the stub" was; and so he asked Matilda Ann, who told him, substantially, that it was a section of a great hollow white-wood tree, set upright, roofed with a broad board, a door cut out of the side, and re-attached with a couple of old boot-strap hinges and a button, wherein, upon shelves sustained by wooden pins, articles of food were stored. A companion tower stood on the other side of the cabin for a smoke-house.

The mother dusted out the spider with her elbow, greased it with a little flap of pork, put in the dough, slashed it across with a knife, gave it a compensation pat with her hand, and careened the utensil propped up with a stone before the splendid fire. The baking cake and the steeping sassafras — though Theophilus had never used the latter as a beverage but always as a *browse* — gave forth a pleasant smell, not to mention certain small slices of pork spluttering in a kettle. Theophilus must be pardoned, for he was as hollow as the long-handled gourd hanging by the brown water-pail.

"Jerush, go to the stub and git the honey, and don't *mux* it. I 'most forgot your Paw cut a bee-tree last week."

"Hitch right up, Kunnel, the table 's sot." Theophilus sat in solitary state, the conversation lulled, every eye was upon him but the father's, who was

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making goose-yokes and a figure-four trap. The mother slowly rocked in the chair with the swinging tail and squeaking mice, and watched him. Matilda Ann leaned lazily against the jamb, the toes of one bare foot resting on the instep of the other, and watched him. The hounds sat up, one each side of his stool, swallowed in concert with him, followed the destination of every morsel with their great melancholy eyes, and watched him. Foxhounds always look as if they could shed tears if they felt like it. As for Jerusha, she sat upright as a tenpin on the other side of the table, and watched him. Theophilus gave her one of his pedagogic annihilation looks, but she only giggled. She did not know enough to be awed.

"Jerusha, behave, or I 'll send you to bed."

"Maw, I ain't doin' nothin' but seein' the Kunnel eat." Apart from this episode, it was a silent ceremonial. Theophilus left a bit of the cake and a finger's width of pork "for manners." Jerusha swept the deck and the supper was a wreck.

The young man found himself in the chimney-corner performing a very childish trick, Jerusha being sole spectator. Taking the great awkward tongs, he laid the tip of a wet finger upon the leg that would lift by the leverage of the handle, and then turning the tongs adroitly, Jerusha exercised her magnetic power upon the leg that *would n't* lift; and, if the girl ever thought of him again, it was as the wonderful schoolmaster who could make the tongs' legs follow his finger "jes ez he wuz a-min' ter."

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Tongs were abandoned, tongues were going, and girlish laughter lightly rippled the surface of general conversation. Theophilus was patting a dog and trying to locate his own bedroom, when the trap-maker said, "Kunnel, it spiles huntin' dogs to *much* 'em;" and the hearer booked the word for subsequent examination. Paw told bear stories and Maw followed with witch stories; upon which Jerusha dragged her stool as near the schoolmaster as she could get it, and her mother said, "Paw 'll fix a goose-yoke an' make you tote it, ef you don't quit bein' so skeery like."

"You never ketched turkeys, I s'pose, Kunnel." Theophilus assured him he had little acquaintance with them except on a plate. "Well, them fowl 's the biggest fools on airth. You build a rail-pen kivered over the top with rails too, an' leave a little place in the fence like an oversized cat-hole, big enough for a turkey to go through with his head down. Then lay a trail o' corn from 'way outside through the gap inter the pen, and them creeters jes nat'rally go peckin' along spang inter the trap. You 're a-watchin' 'way off, but you need n't run to shet 'em in, fur don't you b'lieve they 'll run roun' and roun' the pen an' never think o' bobbin' thar pates at that hole to git out? I never could sense the meanin' on 't, but I reck'n thar 's a kind o' a sarment in 't better 'n a slazy preacher ken preach. Things is most dangersome wen folks hold thar heads highest; let 'em watch thar *feet;* an' they 'll go a heap safer."

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So from one thing to another the talk flitted. Then the girls popped old corn in the spider, and when the great white flakes snowed over the floor, girls and hounds all scrambled together. Then there was a lull, except an occasional small musket-shot from the fireplace, for there was no clock to tick off the silence, until the mother broke out in a softly way, singing to herself. Her voice, once a sweet, girlish tone, was faded like her dress, and a little sharpened with much worry and some scolding. It was the "Babes in the Woods," and in crooning eleven stanzas she sang the tune eleven times. It would have grown familiar even to a strange ear, but it was one of Theophilus's earliest recollections. He had shed tears for those hapless babes "a-wanderin' up and down;" he had meditated signal punishment upon the cruel uncle; he had seen "Old Sickles' Wax Figures," and heard the chirp of robin redbreast that "kivered them with leaves," as the old lady rendered it, and he told her.

How she brightened, lifting both hands in her pleased surprise! "An' so you seen them bless-ed poppets! I 've hearn on 'em, an' ef thar 's one thing I 'd like to do more 'n another afore I die, it 's to see them poppets," — how cheap human happiness may be sometimes! — and she resumed her crooning with considerably more animation, when a rasping, reedy sound, like the squawk of a duck, burst from the lean-to, confounded the vocalist, and she exclaimed, "Jerush, come out o' thar!" and Jerush appeared, the family comb in her hand, and a strip of paper drawn across

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the teeth. Her mother was bound to finish the ballad, when the father snuffed out loftily, "Thet 's chicking feed," and snuffed the singer out also. "S'pose I take down the old fiddle an' give you a tune. Play, Kunnel?" He disclaimed the accomplishment.

"P'r'aps you play keards, but thar ain't a full deck in the shanty." Theophilus Trent, A. B., was as delighted as the girls at the prospect of a tune, but even in the momentary excitement an uncomfortable doubt as to his bedroom intruded, accompanied by a regretful wonder whether anybody in the whole world remembered him that night. The last was idle, if not wicked; for did not his mother sit in the far East that minute, with her heart in the West? After much throttling and twanging of the fiddle Paw struck up "Roy's Wife" and no one stirred a foot; but when he dashed off in "Money Musk," the stools were kicked aside, the dogs ran under the table, and mother and daughters went whirling like the colored glass fragments in a kaleidoscope, — Matilda Ann with much natural grace, Jerusha with much lawless freedom, the mother retracing, and not so awkwardly, the steps of her vanished youth.

The tall father stood in a corner, eyes closed, head thrown back and to one side, the heel of the fiddle hugged under his chin, and the bow as lively as a rapier in a French duel; while the rest of the family flung their feet about as if perpetually kicking off loose shoes and caring little about ever finding them again, while the measured barefoot thump sounded

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like a dance of the churn-dashers. Waltzes as old as the first fiddle followed; then a solo jig by Matilda Ann concluded the saltatory entertainment.

As for Theophilus, sitting in a corner, a fiddle-string ran direct from his head to his toes, and they kept time to the music. He had never danced, — at least not much, and then under his father's immediate supervision, the bow being applied to the dancer and not to the fiddle.

Then the father played "Old Rosin the Beau;" and as the last note of "The Arkansas Traveller" was pulled off the strings, he said, "Jerusha, bring the jug." She produced the clay-colored crockery with its corn-cob cork and a nicked yellow-ware teacup, and he passed them about. All declined but Jerusha, who *in*clined, if she could have it "sweetled," but she could n't; and he, swinging up the jug in a back-handed way, and with "Here 's luck to yer, Kunnel! and —" finished the sentence with two gurgles and a smack. This reprehensible feat accomplished, he took a corn-cob pipe from his hatband, a leaf of tobacco from a bunch hanging on the wall, ground it in the hollow of one hand with the knuckles of the other, crowded it into the pipe-bowl, crowned it with a live coal, drew up a stool by the hearth, began to pull, and clouds of rank smoke rolled round his head like the coming up of a storm.

Then between whiffs hé spoke: "I 'm minded ter tell ye, Kunnel, a beaver story thet 's hard to beat and sure as shootin'. Tew year ago me 'n another feller

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trapsed up North fur big game [*puff*] sich as b'ar, deer, and ef so be a painter or two, but they ain't plenty. Wall, we wuz trudgin' along one day [*whiff*], our kits gittin' purty heavy, when we come ter a beaver-dam and the cutest kind o' a pond, but thar warn't stick or stock in sight, an' never hed ben [*puff*], fit ter work inter a dam. It tuk us back, an' our packs let up so we kud n't scacely feel 'em. Whar did thet tim'er come frum them beaver used? So we [*whiff*] splored roun' an' went mor 'n harf a mild 'long a little ditch thet wuz never dug with no shovel, an' we follered an' follered, ontil we struck a clearin' bigger 'n a couple of door-yards, whar staddles and saplin's an' purty sizable trees hed ben cut. Them stumps [*pipe out*] stood thick as hatchel teeth. We zamined the cuts. No tomahawks done it, ner pig-stickers, ner axes; it wuz jest teeth, and beaver teeth too.

"You see, them beavers foun' a dam-site an' no tim'er, tim'er an' no dam-site. How to git them tew c'modities tergether! But they wuz ekol to 't. They kud n't tug thet tim'er, but mebby they kud *float* it, an' they did. Lookin' over the lay o' the land ez we hed, they foun' thet ef they shud scratch out a kind o' canawl an' let in the water, they could snake thar raw mater'al to whar 't wuz wanted. They scratched, and they did. The dam hed n't ben built more 'n six mon's; an' me an' my mate got down on our marrer-bones an' s'arched tell we foun' the hard groun', all scratched whar they 'd dragged them trees, — an' a

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sight of 'em thar wuz,—yis, jest ez plain ez Ingen trails in peace-times. We stud, me an' him, an' looked at each other like two ijits, an' never opened our dinner-traps; an' we guv it up, an' it *keeps* guv'n up.

"Thet night 't war full moon, an' we crep' out to see the beaver. They wuz makin' some repa'rs, an' I hed a right smart chance ter draw a bead on a beaver; but I kud n't. Kud you? It warn't no 'buck fever,' sich as green hunters hev when they sight thar fust deer an' shake so they kud n't hit a meetin'-house at ten rod; it 's a specie of narvous ager thet ketches 'em. I felt 't would be a kind o' murder to kill a beaver, an' I felt 'nough sight more like taking off my old cap to 'em than shootin'."

He knocked the ashes out of the pipe on his thumb-nail and went out. The mother picked things up a little, chucked the rag-bag under a bed, and swept the hearth.

"Wash your feet off, gals."

One got the skillet, the other a kettle, and disappeared; each returning in five minutes with a pair of clean brown feet, shapely as a statue's by a great sculptor, and stood on the hearth, turning those feet, top, sole, and heel, and drying them in the firelight. Fire was made before looms.

The old man opened the door to let himself in, and his mouth to let a yawn out at the same instant, and said, "Hustle, gals; it 's goin' on ten, an' the stars are shinin' all to oncet, ez Methodies sing at camp-meetin'."

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"How did he know the time?" thought the young man, as, drawing his watch, it showed fifteen minutes to ten. He never wasted his time trying to evolve anything from his "inner consciousness," as a tribe of fresh thinkers is given to saying. That starting the mental mill to grind a grist that was never put into the hopper is very fascinating to æsthetic, metaphysical, be-spectacled millers. But poor Theophilus had no other way of finding out how that man knew the time of night, and so he asked.

"W'y, by the shiftin' o' the stars, — some thet 's risin' an' some thet 's 'most sot. They are sorter boss fellers; but the rest, the hull bilin' of 'em, do nothin' but wink. I know my stars — *clock* stars I call 'em — by sight, but not by name; but what 's the odds? *You* know 'em all, I s'pose."

"Here is this ignorant man," mused Theophilus, "and he has learned to read after his fashion the dial of the sky; and its untarnished lettering is more significant to him than the characters on the face of a kitchen clock. He has not filled the heavens with fanciful mythological shapes. He knows nothing about the Great Bear, but the 'Dipper' he knows, and the 'P'inters' he knows; but Marak and Dubhe are Greek to him. He can walk in the wilderness, of a clear night, and not be lost. He is astronomer enough for his own poor personal needs."

The moment had come. "Thar 's the spar' bed, Kunnel," pointing to one particularly fat, — with straw, — and draped in a red and yellow quilt; "you

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k'n bunk when you 're a-min' ter." The speaker shook himself out of his roomy boots. The mother tucked her head into an unbordered nightcap of neutral tint, set so close about the face that it seemed escaping from a pudding-bag. The father cast off his one suspender. The mother pulled a long brass pin, apparently out of the back of her neck; but really it was to the pillow-case of a dress what the king-bolt is to a wagon,—pull it out, and down comes the vehicle. The girls stood on the hearth, changed feet, and stared. Theophilus watched every move with anxious observation.

He hoped the old man would cover the fire, or the chimney tumble in and extinguish it. But to his confusion, the man, muttering, "Ef I hain't forgot the wood!" pattered out, brought in an armful of limbs and sticks dry as the young man's mouth, tumbled them on to the fire, and trailing one leg of his pantaloons across the floor after him, tumbled himself into bed, and the mother crept after. "Two went to bed, and then there were three."

The hearth was a flare of light, and not a shadow anywhere save in the young man's thought. There the girls stood, changed feet, and watched him. He wondered if it would be a greater loss to the family should the cabin catch fire and burn down right there, than it would be a comfort to him in not having to go to bed as if in a public square in the daytime. He deliberately drew off one boot, then the other; his cravat followed his coat. Then he sat down and wished he was lost in the woods.

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Quick-witted Jerusha snickered, indulged in a little pirouette on one foot, comprehended the situation, enjoyed it, and sat down also. Matilda Ann posed with one shoulder against the jamb and looked conscious but contented. A snort by way of overture, and a medley of quarrelsome snores snarled and growled from the occupied bed. This created a diversion, and the girls laughed like a chime of merry bells.

If he could only shake himself, be disrobed and between sheets in a second, as those girls could! The desperate moment had come. He loosened a string or two, freed a button or two, gathered the garment up as if he had himself safe in a bag, so that he could shell himself as a thumb-nail can empty a pea-pod, abruptly exclaimed, "Miss Matilda, don't I hear something in the lean-to?" and to Jerusha, "A drink of water, please," and blindly plunged for the "spar' bed." Matilda was rattling among the pots and the pans, Theophilus was just ready to swirl the yellow "drapery of his couch about him," when something touched his ear. Turning a startled eye, he caught sight of a huge weapon like an old-style Sioux war-club. There stood Jerusha, extending a long-handled gourd of water, with which, in her roguish haste to catch him before he escaped to sleep, she liberally drenched him. Theophilus began to say something in a sputtering way, but she was camped on a stool before the fire, shaking as with an ague. It might have been the play of the fitful light upon her person, or it might

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have been a convulsion of repressed laughter. Theophilus had misgivings, but he slept as only youth and health can sleep.

The instant before he dropped into oblivion, he vigorously determined to be up and dressed and serene before an eye belonging to either of his next neighbors flew open. The dumb and sightless hours went by, and he woke in a fright lest he had out-slept the night. A great glare did indeed fill the cabin, but it was the newly-made fire of early morning, and the old man, the builder, sat smoking and nodding beside it. Theophilus stole a look at his nearest neighbors,—so near that he might have pulled Jerusha's ear. Two tumbled heads of hair lay upon the lean pillows, one bare arm showing white on the sad-colored quilt. By a merciful dispensation both faces were toward the wall and both girls asleep. The teacher slipped cautiously out of bed, and no sword was ever returned to its scabbard with more military promptness than were those lean legs encased in the pantaloons. The rest was the work of a minute, and he was ready for the innocent enemy; but none too soon.

"Gals, rout out!" growled the father. The heads turned inland, and each owner rose upon a naked elbow and surveyed the situation. Theophilus would have fled ignobly out of doors, but for the fear he might be pelted with derisive giggles. He thought of the Sphinx, and tried to decoy a far-away look into his eyes as if beholding distant ages, and be as nearly like that solemn stone presence as possible. Two

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hands pulled two frocks lying upon the bed toward two chins, four hands drew two skirts over two heads, and the twain, giving little tugs here and little kicks there, as if dressing their plumage, sat upright and clothed; a few more downward kicks under the bed-covering, swung themselves sidewise one after the other, and there were four feet in a row. Finally, giving themselves a little shake, they stood upon the floor dressed *cap-a-pie*, even as Minerva sprang from the brain of Jupiter. Jerusha made a little claw of each hand and combed her tangled tresses. Matilda Ann smoothed her hair with her open palms, and, the toilet made, the daughters of the household were abroad.

Theophilus declared his intention to resume the journey at once, giving several reasons, but omitting the only one that really influenced his decision. Is not that the way of the most of us, and is it honest, or only diplomatic? He firmly withstood the general protest. Even the dog wagged his tail of invitation. The East was red with the new day, a tavern only eight miles distant, he wanted — indeed, he wanted many things, but the principal one was to get away. Yes, he must go.

"'T'l be a good spell, Kunnel, afore you git breakfas'. They'll treat you better'n we ken at the tavern, though the woman's the man o' the house; but the gals'll git you a snack right now." "What of?" thought Theophilus. Yet he thankfully declined it all.

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He had measured his host, and made quite sure a proffer of money, much as he seemed to need it, would "rile" him, as he would express it; so the traveller heartily thanked, what visiting ministers used to pray for, "the united head of this family," and then he gave each of the girls — what was very rare in those regions of monetary rags — a silver coin of generous diameter, — there went two of his three pocket-pieces, — at sight of which Matilda flushed and smiled, Jerusha laughed, both dropped a quaint little courtesy, plumb down, while their eyes, brighter than the coins, about equalled them in circumference, with the wonder of it.

Friendly good-byes were his portion as he went out with his host to find the ponies just finishing a wrestle with two plump little sheaves of oats.

"Kunnel, I hev n't told you my name; it 's — "

"Oh, I know it already, Mr. Spicer; I saw it in your Bible."

"Yes, Heck Spicer; an' my pups is named arter me, — one 's Heck and 't other 's Spicer."

The old man had said the night before that he must braid a whip-lash, for the colts had chewed the old one about up. The schoolmaster had purchased a silver-mounted carriage-whip before he left Bodkins, not because he needed it, but for show. He had no use for it whatever, and would never have done much more than affectionately touch a horse with it, unless the animal were securely tied, or had been consigned to the knacker. Theophilus, as a sort of parting gift,

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asked the old man to accept the whip. To be sure, he might quite as appropriately have presented him with an opera-glass. Spicer, to give him his name for once, himself perceived the unfitness of the gift as clearly as if he had a bank account, and he refused it. The schoolmaster insisted, saying, "If Jerusha marries and has a phaeton, give *her* the whip in memory of this time." He never asked himself why he selected Jerusha. Perhaps it was because human nature relishes a bit of amiable mischief now and then.

"That'll do better; but then she'll never hev a — a — what did ye call it? — some kind of a kerridge — any more 'n I'll hev a pianner. But ef you say so, I'll hev the old woman wind it up in a nice clean cloth, an' I'll put up a peg for 't at the head of our bed, to hang it on agin sich time ez — but that'll never come — and look at it and say, 'Thet's the Kunnel's whip he gin, and we wish the Kunnel luck.'"

In five minutes Theophilus was gone, another "good luck" roared at him as he went.

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CHAPTER XVII.

ESCAPED FROM THE ENVIRONMENT. — LOOKING AT A PICTURE. — A COUNTRY FUNERAL. — THEOPHILUS IN DANGER, AND ASSISTS AT A CAPTURE.

WHAT a pleasant world it was, and how long ago it seemed since he was groping about in the dark to find a wagon-track! And it was only last night! He had seen human nature in the rudest of environments. Poverty had pinched, but they did not steal. Disappointments vexed, but had not embittered them. They had heard of Vanity Fair, if somewhat mistily, but they did not long for it. Perhaps, if prosperity came, it would shut up their hearts and put over the doors of them, "No admission except on business." Shun such as you would a dwelling with a yellow flag at the gate. Many better natures have died of a heart complaint for which medical science has neither name nor antidote.

Envy is not a vice peculiar to the poor. The eyes of affluence often look askance with it. Alexander sighed because he had no more worlds to conquer; but if he had met a fellow-creature who by any possibility had two worlds, he would have hated and slain him, and possessed them both.

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The ponies were in good heart, the road direct and smooth, and Theophilus kept puzzling himself: "Will either of those girls escape the rough and sordid surroundings, and if she does, will she be dwarfed if not deformed? Will the womanly grace she was born to, be scarred, if not utterly effaced?" The problem was to be solved for him twenty-five years later, and in a distant city.

At the house of a friend Theophilus met a lady from the West. He had been silently observing her as she walked to and fro beside the hostess with the free action of some graceful creature of the woods. Her gray eyes often brightened like two gray skies with a delicate dawn in them. Her face was fresh and fair. Her shining hair bound a lifted head that seemed at once to listen and to look. Gentle of manner, but not grave, she had the kind of voice that lingers pleasantly in the memory like a strain of a remembered melody; her smile appeared at the same instant on the lips and in the eyes, and her laugh was the laugh of a happy child. Theophilus was strangely interested in the lady. She provoked, yet challenged recollection. He had seen somewhere the rude, rough *study*, so to express it, of such a woman, but it was not a woman. A memory that flickers just beyond our reach is one of the most tantalizing of mental phenomena.

His hostess disturbed his musing: "Let me present you to my friend Mrs. Fleming."

She gave him her hand in a frank, free way, looked up in his face with an arch but tremulous smile, as

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she recalled something that both saddened and amused her, and said, "Mr. Trent, I have the whip yet, laid away, if not in lavender, at least among my most cherished treasures." Theophilus caught his breath, and he recognized, wondered, and was silent; but she kept right on, "And I am, if you please," dropping an old-fashioned courtesy, — "I am Jerusha Spicer, Jerush for short, and I have a young Theophilus Trent Fleming."

Theophilus's words were fairly startled out of reach, but he lingered long enough over the parting to learn that her husband was a lawyer who had achieved success; that all were dead but her sister, who was the wife of a substantial farmer, with big broods of children and chickens about her; that Matilda Ann sent her every year — and she laughed as she said it — a sage *cheese* of her own make. Here a pair of funny thoughts peeped like little mice out of a crevice into Theophilus's mind, as he recalled the long gone night he saw the dust elbowed out of the spider, and that calico cheese with a girl's head served up on it.

The little wicket of the far Past was ajar, and they stood side by side, and for a silent moment saw a small cabin in the wilderness, two barefoot girls, "the old folks at home," the broadly-smiling fire, the three beds in a row, and the gourd hanging against the wall. At this instant the hostess passing near, with a breath of laughter blew the wicket to, Jerusha faded out, Mrs. Fleming was beside him, they clasped hands once

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more, and never met again. Thus the problem Theophilus puzzled over, as he rode eight miles to breakfast, — "Will the girls escape their environment?" — was solved almost a generation later, and the answer was an emphatic "YES."

A low-browed inn was reached, and an open-browed landlady brought him breakfast, while the manikin of a landlord, who resembled a composite of jerked beef, and who, had he worn a long wooden tag, would have been less likely to be pocketed by some stalwart, light-fingered wayfarer, took the money.

In a low, damp spot, heavily shaded, in a corner of the garden, stood a large shrub new to Theophilus. It had long, straggling, helpless-looking branches, some of them lying on the ground as if wearied; none of them ever took root, though they seemed to want to. The little tree had a pathetic expression with those vagrant limbs, as of some one leading a wandering life, seeking rest and finding none. Theophilus asked a boy at the well the name of the shrub. "That," he replied, plainly making the same sort of pretension to accurate pronunciation as the woman who mentioned the Lombardy "populars," — "that is the wayfarrow-tree." "Oh, no, Willie," the landlady called from the kitchen door, "it 's the wayfarer's tree;" and Theophilus drove thoughtfully away.

The country brightened, the farms broadened, the dwellings grew commodious. Here and there the old log cabin stood modestly behind the new house neat and white as a country-girl's company-apron, and

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sometimes with the green trimming of a running vine at the corners of it. "The women-folks" extended the guiding threads, and Nature designed and embroidered. Even the wild cucumber and the hop were not despised. The cabin had been the first nest of the early birds of Michigan, reduced to be a catch-all for things that seem to belong nowhere. It used to be, that when the pedagogue was at a loss to classify a word he gave it a bad name and tumbled it in with the adverbial rabble. Those abandoned cabins held the miscellaneous adverbs of the farmer's premises.

As our traveller was slowly approaching a roadside schoolhouse, he noticed children's faces appearing and disappearing at the windows like phantasmagorial spectres. In a moment the door opened and the girls and boys filed out, headed by the bright young schoolma'am, who had been a pupil of Theophilus during his first term. The children were drawn up in line along the road, hats in hand and sun-bonnets by the strings. Theophilus halted, and the teacher gave the order as old as her grandmother, "Attention! Obeisance!" The boys bowed like so many cat-tails blown by a strong wind, and the girls made courtesies of all varieties, from a little jolt to a slow settling as if going through to China feet-first, and then a scattering flight of shrill cheers and piping yells. The smiling teacher greeted her principal, and he drove on, having seen the second generation of his life-work, his pupil's pupils, and felt himself a sort of pedagogic grandfather, and received his first ovation. He began to think well

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of himself, which is not a very original form of meditation as the world goes.

At a distance he saw a one-horse wagon with a man in it making diagonals in the road, and he feared that either the man or the horse had a habit of drinking. Every two minutes the driver clambered out and swung his arms forward as if he said "Shoo," or flung them wide to embrace somebody or scare something; then sudden plunges, quick dodges right and left; then a few rods' retreat, an awkward jump, a vicious lashing-out of one foot, as if a wooden leg should kick, — altogether, as viewed by the observer, an incomprehensible pantomime. Near enough to see, Theophilus discovered a rather rough man trying to drive a very muddy shoat with a horse and wagon!

"How d' ye do, friend? I 'm trying to drive the devil. The devils [*jump*] had the job a good [*plunge towards the fence*] ma-ny years ago — ha, you brute! — and one of them must have been — whee, there! — left over."

"Why don't you let him ride?"

"Well, for a young gentleman who — no you don't! — does n't look as if he ever saw a pig except in the roast, that 's right down sensible — whee! — but how to catch him — will you help?"

"It is not always safe to make suggestions," thought the young man, but he said "Yes."

"Thank you; I don't want you to touch the beast, but just keep him from running back; we 'll get him into the fence corner and I 'll dive for him."

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Taking the halter from the wagon, the play began. Theophilus "balanced to partners" a few times, ran to and fro, as if these queer actions were something contagious and he had caught it; but when the pig proposed to make a Colossus of Rhodes of the schoolmaster, and take a dive between his feet, he knew the statue must tumble, and he mounted the fence with considerable alacrity.

"There! I've got him!" exclaimed the stranger. "Bring that horse-blanket for a cushion and sit down on him" — a situation! — "while I tie his forelegs." That done, he whipped off his suspenders — Theophilus sitting like the Lord Chancellor on the woolsack, except that the wool was bristles — and secured the other pair, swung the pig into the wagon with two grunts, — one the pig's and the other his own, — took breath, wiped his hands on his horse's tail, and said, "Do I look like a man who hugs hogs and uses horses' tails for towels?"

"You don't *talk* like one," laughed Theophilus, eying his soiled and dishevelled appearance.

"I'll tell you how it happened. I had a good home and a comfortable competence, and was dissatisfied. Shall I tell you what is the matter with me? Got into a tussle with wild-cats — banks, you know — and torn to pieces — never recovered — never shall. I thank you for your aid in my latest — ah — enterprise. Good-by."

Theophilus sped away, — past men ploughing with oxen; past men threshing with flails; past men tossing

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grain with scoop-shovels, that the wind might fly away with the chaff; past men murdering stately trees and concealing the crime by fire, who twenty years after should mourn the reckless ruin of the best crop they ever had; past women drawing water with well-sweeps; past children husking little patches of eight-rowed corn for early samp; past outdoor ovens squatting like great cats that have rolled in ash-heaps; past rows of beehives braided of yellow straw like anomalous helmets for giants; past women spinning on big wheels in the shade; past everybody's Four Corners; past one boy tossing up a ball to toss it up again, two boys playing "barn-ball" against the blank side of a schoolhouse, three boys playing "drive ball," four boys playing "two old cat," eight boys playing "double base," — the national game in its infancy, cynics might say in its innocency; past men pitching quoits; past wrestlers locked in side hold, standing up in square hold; past children playing hop-scotch, snap-the-whip, follow-the-leader; past a foot-pedler bending beneath a striped square pack like Pilgrim Christian under his load of sin; past a red-wagon pedler whose jangled cargo sets the ponies off in a gallop; past country meeting-houses with weedy graveyards adjoining, and drowsy sheep maundering about, or lying down between the little graves, a stake at the head, a small mullein at the foot. These are of them whom the Scriptures say "we have always with us;" these are of them for whom it should be easy to enter the kingdom of heaven.

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Theophilus reined up to a penstock to water. It was near a blacksmith-shop, and groups of the busiest idlers in the neighborhood were standing about; two or three sat on the horse-trough, and one managed to balance himself on a shovel-handle, but all "drawing the long bow," and not one of them an archer. Somebody spoke quietly: "The percession is coming down the road — poor old Lanpher's girl Irene, just sixteen and *that* purty; and as good dispositioned as an angel."

On it came, — a short, dark skein trailed along the bright world. No plumed hearse, no glossy carriages. The coffin was borne in a lumber-wagon, guiltless of springs as a gallows-tree, and the four bearers rode with it. At the head were two men in a gig; they were the minister and the doctor.

Theophilus bared his head as they approached, and sat silent, and two or three followed his example. The second wagon was filled with a heavy cloud of sorrow. In it were six mourners, young and old, whose sobs and moans, though muffled in the crape that sympathetic friends had lent, were painfully distinct. They cared for nothing then but the girl they were accompanying such a little way only to turn and leave her in the loneliness. It seemed so heartless in them, so cruel to her; but these are only the seeming and the weakness of our estate.

The last wagon contained only neighbors' children, and it was plain to the loungers that two of them were in the act of swapping knives! One fellow saw

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it and retreated to the blacksmith-shop to laugh becomingly and in secret. They had slowly filed by, and soon the bars would be let down and the sheep frightened away, and another lamb for the fold laid safely in the Israelites' "house of the living."

Do not mistake, my king of commerce, my queen of fashion, my prince of poets, the world can manage quite as well perhaps without you as that neighborhood could without the bright and flower-like presence of that dead girl. Christendom is only a collection of neighborhoods; all the differences are incidents, if really they are not accidents.

Theophilus waited a little to hear what his companions would say. One of them, with nose awry, as if being given to turning short corners he had sometimes found that organ in the way, the schoolmaster instinctively disliked, for he had met his congeners in broadcloth and fine linen, — the kind of man that says "Doc" for Doctor, and "Deak" for Deacon, unsatisfactorily proving that *his* "familiarity breeds contempt."

"Well," he said, "that 's cool of the Doc, to head a percession of his own make, bound to see his patient the rest of the way out of the world, seein' he had helped her along far enough to take this short journey. That 's what some folks *say*. I 've got no faith in Doc —"

"Oh — oh!" he groaned, interrupting himself and dancing frantically about, both hands to his side; "go for the Doc as quick as ever you *c-a-n!*"

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A smile flickered about the mouths of his auditors, and Theophilus, blaming himself for not feeling a *scintilla* of sympathy for the fellow, drove rapidly on. "Irene!" he thought; "what a beautiful name for a quiet village, a gentle girl, a better angel, or a graveyard!" And then he tried to fancy how such an inscription as this would look upon a tablet: —

"EVANGEL!
Her earthly name was
RUTH.
Henceforth she shall be called
IRENE,
Which is Peace."

Bordering the road ran a narrow selvage of a path printed off in the damp places with little toes and clumsy hobnailed heels. The ponies paced soberly along, and the rider read the writing: now one of a pair of prints lighter than the other, showing the maker was a trifle lame, and so was his dog, — see the three footprints at his heels; now a single impression and a large round dot in company, putting a period to the one foot every time, showing there was no other to come.

But the selvage was wrought chiefly by school-children like lively shuttles running to and fro, and seemed to keep the road from ravelling out. That meandering path making small détours round stump and stone, running up on trunks of fallen trees and making noiseless grooves in the mossy wood, lost in

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skip-acrosses of brooks to reappear beyond, made pleasant reading; and Theophilus thanked God for the children, and wondered what would have become of him had he blundered into a childless world. Nothing left but to advertise in the newspapers with the Moor of Venice. Then he thought how it would look, took out pencil and paper, and wrote it: —

"'OCCUPATION'S GONE.'
A liberal reward for another one. Apply to
OTHELLO AND TRENT."

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CHAPTER XVIII.

A MOVING SCENE. — HOUSELESS SWALLOWS.

THE quiet road worked out of woods and shadow into clearings and sunshine, and Othello's advertising partner came in sight of a big building black around the doors with men and boys, like bees about to swarm around a monstrous hive. They were making ready to move a barn, and Theophilus was there to see.

It was a Babel of confusion; everybody faced anybody and shouted like a speaking-trumpet. They had associated so much with cattle and horses, and always with the notion that not a head of them could hear much of anything but thunder, that they went about hailing man and beast in their tempestuous way, and could not "roar you gently as" anything but a Numidian lion.

And the oxen: broad horns, knobbed horns, crumpled horns, no horns; beasts that swing deliberately along in a ponderous way; nervous steers ready to run as blooded colts; old yoke-bearers with great meek Juno eyes that winked fast their trembling lids if you but lifted your friendly hand before them, thus bearing convicting witness to the cruelty of their drivers. And then the colors, from the pure white of

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Priscilla's puritanic steed through all the shades of red and brown, blue and brindled, down to plain black and white like a legal contract.

Theophilus was sorry for one ox so homely he was afraid the creature knew it and was miserable because of mortified vanity, — horns curved down at the corners of his eyes like the old-time "spit-curls" of the girls, giving him the look of Mephistopheles in the first place; a dimple, so to call it, a half-peck deep in front of each hip-bone, in the second place; and curtailed in the last place.

And there they were, rounded up in a tangle of heads, horns, heels, and chains.

And the barn: no balloon structure with herring-bone frame, but trees squared and hewed, and bound together as with belaying-pins, — a barn with the big beam and the mighty bay and the diamond swallow-holes in the gables. The great sled-runner timbers are adjusted in three rows; side by side, beneath the building, the oxen are unknotted and hawed and geed into three lines, the heavy chains are hooked and toggled, a yoke is eased up on a neck here and there, and three ten-in-hands ready for a dead pull, thirty men with lifted whips ready to strike, thirty mouths ready to give tongue.

The master-mover with a pike-pole doubles the barn as if it were a cape and he an "ancient mariner," sees that all is ship-shape, comes to the front, — for it *is* a front, and there is to be a battle between *vis inertia* and *vis muscle*, — and says, —

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"Now, men, ready when I count three. Start easy, start all together, or the links will be flying round your heads like chain-shot. Straighten up your lines — steady!"

Such a crowding and shouldering of cattle into place, such backing and filling, grasping oxen by the tail, grasping steers by the horns, and nudging with whipstocks, as there is!

"One, two, *three*, — PULL!"

The whips come down together with the sound of whistling winds and swishing rains, and the voices break out along the lines: —

"*Whoa* haw!" "Haw *h-e-r-e*, haw! haw!" "Haw, Buck, go 'long!" "Haw, Bright!" "Haw, *haw*, Star!"

Then "Gee, ho GEE! *Gee* OFF!" Then whole flights of *Haws*, whips playing between words, lashes cracking like pistols overhead, cattle straining, shaking heads, leaning to the yokes as if they would pull through them, barn and all.

Creaking in its oaken joints, the barn moves. Its mighty mass will never cast its shadows again on the plum-trees behind it — its inertia is conquered — it is on a journey. What a turn-out for Hercules is here!

At a safe distance the boys hold pow-wow. Such shouting and dancing and whirling hats! Theophilus stands on the fence, swings his arms like a semaphore, and shouts "HAW!" before he knows it. "Whoa, whoa there!" and thirty whipstocks are laid not ungently on thirty heads, as if thirty kings — and who

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are kings if not those drivers of oxen?—had laid their swords in accolade upon thirty candidates for knighthood.

A chain snapped and a fragment flew into the weeds. Ten boys heeled it through the thistles, catching up a foot occasionally with a grimace that would grace a comic annual; one of them finds it. How little he thinks, as he counts the links, "One, two, three," that he holds in his hand an emblem that, wrought in fine gold, shall be worn on myriads of breasts,—three links, "Friendship, Love, and Truth."

Some of the oxen along the line are lolling, some ruminating with a quiet swing of the under jaw, some repeating the whiplash exercise with their whisking tails. The men are bustling about, mending chains, patting cattle, cracking jokes and knuckle-joints. Some repair to a fence-corner to tip up a jug with a large blue hieroglyphic outside and something blue inside. Boys slyly slip little slabs of gingerbread from the lunch-baskets. A man is tossing himself large fragments of doughnuts, as if he fed an elephant.

A few belated swallows are dodging about in the newly-emptied air to find their diamond windows gone. Theophilus saw the birds in dress-coats of cut so like the one he sacrificed on the altar of ridicule, that he forgot for an instant the stirring scene. Twenty years after, he watched a Chicago warehouse burn. The doves in the loft escaped in time, but, amid the noise of speaking-trumpets and cries of men and roar

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of flames, they flew in bewildered circles round about, with little notion of the calamity that had befallen them. The building turned to ashes, and yet they hovered round, at near the very height their sky-parlor windows had been.

"Ah," the schoolmaster said, "those doves recall what no other creature has thought of since — my poor little swallows of the Michigan barn;" and then he told the story.

The triumphant strains are very few indeed that have no sigh in the minor key within them.

As the engagement was about beginning again, Theophilus, admonished by the sinking sun, dismounted the fence and left the battlefield. The moving of the barn had moved *him* as well. His nature had been stirred by that most improbable motor, *ox* power, and he had learned a lesson.

Not the sleek-coated, deer-legged, frisky steers, but the slow and, as the calves thought, stolid old oxen, moved the wooden mountain.

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CHAPTER XIX.

CAPTAIN JOB HAUSER, "AN OLD SALT." — HIS SHIP ASHORE. — A MUSEUM. — BEAUTY OF LIFE. — HORSE-WHIPS AS PERSUASIVES TO PRAYER. — THE CAPTAIN'S OPINIONS. — COUNTRY SUNDAY.

AN hour's brisk ride brought him to a patchwork quilt of farms, and he drew up before one of the largest dwellings with its outlying colony of barns, sheds, and pens. The owner of the premises was Captain Job Hauser, a small-bodied, big-hearted, round-headed man as wiry as a rat-trap, a kindly man with a quarter-deck way; and though, as he often complained, the farm was forever in the doldrums, he never got rid of his sea-legs, but went rolling about in the jolliest way. He looked as if he might walk a crack on the deck of a moderate earthquake without capsizing.

At sea, man and boy, for thirty years, he was briny as a pickled herring. Talking so much where rattling halyards, flapping sails, whistling winds, and hissing seas maintained lively conversations, his voice was strong, and always a little damp and hoarse as with a chronic cold. Yielding to his wife's tearful entreaties, he abandoned the sea, and saying the surest deliverance from temptation was to slip cable and run, packed his household goods and gods, and made a

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land voyage of a thousand miles due West, — which means ten thousand as the world moves now, — and grounded in the wilderness. He always insisted that when he ran aground he suffered shipwreck; but he enjoyed it like a sailor ashore, with his children everywhere underfoot, or looking him square in the eye, and his wife, a large-patterned, good-looking, and most womanly woman, just the companion for such a lavish, amiable, pungent pepper-box of a man as "Captain Job," — for so she always called him.

Theophilus's boyish recollections showed the figure of the off-handed Captain, who, having heard of his young friend's first dignity at Bodkins, had invited him to come and spend a few of his vacation days at his home; and this is the letter that brought him:

MICHIGAN HORSE LATITUDES, Sept. 8, 18—.

DEAR YOUNG SHIPMET, — Soon as ever you get your clearance, up sails and make for this port and no duties to pay. The crew here is all aboard, from cabin-boy, ten months old, to first mate and skipper. When you sight anybody near Drake's Mill hail him and ask for Uz, for you must know that is what the neighbors call my cabin, because, I suppose, my name is Job, and I have a gate with a whale's jaw for a frame, and anybody will tell you.

When you make "Job's Gate," that's the name I give it, and I tell them it's the only door-yard Bible allusion there is in the county, — my fist has sheered off badly, but no matter, — when you spy that gate, heave to and sing out. We'll man the yards and give you a sailor's welcome, and after that, maybe, a bit of junk and plum duff for a change, and perhaps splice the main brace;

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but perhaps you don't, and if so be you don't, *don't;* and, on second thought, if you do, I would say don't any more, and that's a fact.

Hoping to make out your signals soon and speak the ship, I am yours to command,

JOB HAUSER,
In charge of Ship Uz, laid up in ordinary.

Yes, Theophilus was at Uz. There was "Job's Gate," and there, on the peak of the barn gable, was a triangular sky-scraper the Captain called a ski-sel, upon a tall spar spread like a hand's palm at the end of a skeleton arm, while an old ship's flag hung dejectedly from an upper window. Further observations were abruptly ended by a hoarse, hearty "Ahoy! welcome as a breeze in a dead calm!" and out came the Captain, rolling along at eight knots an hour; and out came the personable mother and the crew, while the nursing cabin-boy crept to the edge of the threshold and turned a somersault on the doorstone without a whimper. With much shaking of hands and "spatter-work" of talk they reached the house.

Beside the door the huge shell of a sea-turtle, large enough to stow away the cabin-boy and his belongings, was careened, whose late owner the Captain capsized by moonlight on the sands of a beach with a Spanish name. Within the house, every wall and corner showed the spoils of distant seas and many lands. Slung up by a bedroom door was the very glass with which, from the mast-head, he had swept strange horizons before the salt spray had washed the color

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out of his hair in places. The very instrument with which he had taken sun, moon, and other things he could not reach, was in a case beside the glass, his battered old speaking-trumpet hanging near.

An ostrich egg swung in a netting from the ceiling; an elephant's tusk was mounted like a powder-horn; star-fish, pebbles bright as jewelry, strowed a large black tea-tray; and a necklace of marbled eggs of sea-birds decorated the clock. Sea-shells, from the great conchs of the Bahamas to the pearly spirals that once sheltered infinitesimal life, were disposed all about; shells iridescent enough to have been the abode of span-long rainbows, that left brilliant traces upon the walls of their little habitations; shells with the murmur of ocean in them, — or was it not the sighing for them "who went down to the sea in ships" and were never heard of more? Great pink and yellow fans of coral adorned the walls, or, in pure white, lay piled like crystals of snow upon mantel and stand, — tarnished stalactites that might once have been fancied icicles of frozen moonlight.

He had brought home souvenirs of far lands. Here was the Australian bird with its painted lyre, and not one of its sixteen feather strings was missing; here was a green parrot no longer in the flesh but on the wires, whose talk would have filled a forecastle with expletives of noisy admiration. It was among the few melancholy traditions of the family. Older than the children, she had led a jolly, chattering life, until one day she set off with, "Come, all ye jolly mariners,"

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screamed out, "Poor Polly kick the bucket—tell that to the marines, the sailors won't be—" fell from the perch a dead bird, and threw the family into mourning; and her memory was as green as her plumage.

Among the Captain's personal reminders were a cocoanut a monkey had thrown at him, and an arrow a savage had shot at him. In that place in the heart of Michigan you could easily fancy yourself in some Nantucket home, a windrow of sea-weed combed up in sight by the ever-harvesting ocean, and a gust of salted air saluting you at the open door. But the Captain's most valued treasure was the model of his favorite ship, the "Nautilus," rigged, painted, holiday flags flying as in life, shored up in a mimic dock.

Beautiful as it is, there is something not altogether cheerful in such a collection, — nothing in it that has not had a life and lost it. The coral creature has ceased to build, the sea-mosses and birds are dead, the shells are empty, haunted houses, the star-fish are rayless, and the sea-urchins have shed their spines.

Turning to the swarming household is a bright relief; the children darting and chirping in and out like crickets by firelight; mother and girls quick-footed, nimble-handed, cheerful, — the sort of girls that are always under age, the mother as young as the daughters, and all going about the duties of the hour. The broad deck of a table holds the centre of the floor against all comers, a standing institution, as the Captain says; whoever navigates that room, coasts or

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beats about or doubles that table. Every one has run against it, every youngster has caught a bump.

Beneath it, walled round with aprons, the small fry play keeping house, and cat and dog escape from under foot. It is the rock-ahead to the whole family, and the knock-a-head to the smaller ones; but thrice a day they cluster eagerly around it as round a providential palm, and eat and drink and are satisfied. If they had far more than "a dinner of herbs where love is," at least they did not have "a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

Gathered around the table, Theophilus at the Captain's right, the random talk grows lively, though knives and forks are busy. Lacking other condiments, bright conversation will season a dinner. The Captain was a good man to sail a ship, feed a family, put a shoulder to a neighbor's wheel, and sometimes, in unfriendly weather, a *spoke* in it. He had more theology than religion. Such combinations are not rare. He was a born arguer, and the worst of his sins were committed in maintaining what he believed to be truth. He was intemperate because he drank five cups of tea at a sitting; intemperate in a fierce, apparently unloving advocacy of what he believed and a savage denunciation of what he did not. That very day he was about to horsewhip a neighbor because he would not kneel down in the road and pray for himself. His wife, seeing him collar the man, ran out to the gate, calling as she ran, "Captain Job, do you hear? seeing you are the namesake of the man you

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are, pity he could n't have willed you a little more patience. The pigs are in the garden!" The Captain dropped his prisoner, and rolled away to eject the pigs. If "a little pot is soon hot," it cools just as quickly.

Supper over, the Captain donned his tarpaulin, took down his telescope, and went out. Theophilus looked inquiringly, and Mrs. Hauser explained: "Life-long habits are hard to break; and as for Captain Job, he takes comfort in them, and I am glad they are. Soon after we came here he built a sort of lookout upon the wagon-shed, and three times a day he climbs up and sweeps the neighborhood with his glass. I never heard of his sighting a ship, but I have seen him count Mr. Fowler's chickens a mile off, and a flock of crows on a distant tree. Occasionally he takes observations with the sextant, and assures me he knows just where we are to a minute. Some of the neighbors pretend to think him insane. If so, it is a very pleasant and comfortable insanity. I hope the day will be long a-coming when Captain Job forgets his lookout, and his spy-glass hangs forgotten on the wall.

"He has brought fragments of his old floating home and scattered them all over the house. When he built the broad veranda, one of the neighbors offended him by saying, 'It seems to me, Captain, pretty much all the inside of your house is outside.' 'See to it, then, that you keep on the side easiest to get to.'

"He calls the veranda the deck, the kitchen is the caboose, our bedroom the captain's cabin, and the

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cellar is the hold. See that little stand with the old compass and lantern on it? That is the binnacle, and upon birthday and holiday nights he lights it. These souvenirs of his sea-faring days are very pleasant to him and very pleasant to me, and we are a happy crew, from tiller to fo'k'sle. Why should n't I catch the sailor way, with one twenty years for a shipmate?" she laughed.

The Captain returned, put up the glass, but forgot the hat. "One thing I miss here," he says, "oysters in the shell, right out of the beds, sixpence a peck. Do you know a man can starve to death on oysters? He can. Eighteen of us were wrecked on a reef, and lay there twenty days waiting for rescue. There was plenty of rain-water in the hollows of the rocks, and oysters alongside by hundreds of bushels. Why, the shells would have paved Broadway, New York. We thought ourselves in luck, and we were; but by and by some of us began to get that thin and weak, at last we could just make shift to drag ourselves about. How we longed for junk and hard-tack; and a noggin of rum would n't have gone bad, either. Well, if a coaster had n't spied us and took us off, she would have had little to do but launch us — starved to death. Take away butter, salt, pepper, and crackers galore, and oysters are slim diet."

A light double-shuffle at the door as one of the girls came in laughing all over: "I 've been down to see Cleanthy Maples, — her folks have got back from down Boston way, and don't you think, old Mrs.

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Maples has brought her mother's gravestone along, — a gray, mossy thing; I saw it, — and what do you think she 's going to do with it? She said, 'The letters were half washed off, and nobody left down there that cared anything about it or what 't was for, and somebody might steal it, and it was no use to anybody in the livin' world,'" — the girl was a mimic, — "'and I 'll put it de-own at the kitchen door for a doorstun, and I 'll remember mother all the better.' Yes," Clarissa added, "remember her ma every time she steps on her monument with a pail of swill, and mourning for her ma every time the pigs squeal!"

"Clarissa!" said her mother; and if ever a tone was a check-rein, *that* was; and Clarissa was curbed and quiet.

"How would you like to command a steamboat, Captain?" asked Theophilus.

"Not at all, — no teakettles afloat for me, smoking like coal-pits, with their screechings, burnings, and blowings up. The world is getting the hurry fever. There 's just as much time as there ever was, but people want to get ten years' work out of five years' time, and, as a rule, whenever they do, it costs them five years' life for the job. You can get about so much out of anything. If a heart is rigged to beat one hundred and ninety billion times, it will, with good management, beat them and 'lay to,' and you 'll be piped down from the 'first dog-watch' when you might have had the second.

"No; give me a full-rigged ship piled sky-high with

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canvas like three tiers of cloud, a humming breeze, and an open sea for a sight! She 's as alive as anything that 's going, shoulders the wind 'starburd' and 'larburd,' takes a bone in her teeth, kicks the sea into foam behind her, and leaves a wide wake for the moon to walk in. The winds all p'ints but the p'int she 's bound for, she keeps her course. When a kite flies with the wind she dives, and a full-rigged ship, she 's the kite of the sea. There is nothing on land or sea so handsome except a woman."

"What a gallant tar you are, Captain Job!" said Deborah.

"I saw once in Liverpool a picture of a ship a-flying. I could about reckon the knots she made by the looks of things,—the scud, the sea-birds drifting one way like bundles of feathers, everything taut that will stand it, pussy-sails as full as they can hold, streamers straight as ramrods. Under it all, for there was a *world* of it, was a line from one Dryden. He is worth looking up for this one line,—

'The bellying canvas strutted with the gale.'

That man had an eye worth having. '*Strutted*' as if she was proud, did she? Ay, and nobody a better right!

"I 'm not much on poetry except a few ballads, sea-songs, and some conference-meeting hymns; but I call that line poetry, if poetry means dressing a thing up in words that set it afire without burning it a particle,—the fire of life. When I was cabin-boy, my

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old Captain told a heathen story about Pyg— Pyg— what 's the rest of him that was n't pork, Theophilus? — who made an ivory girl, fell in love with it, got some goddess or other to breathe life into it, and married her."

"Pygmalion," Theophilus said.

"Ay, that 's the man; Pygmalion was a poet, my way of thinking; made a thing he had n't *exactly* seen, put life into it, and the 'it' became a 'she,' and turned, as 't were, the world's sweetheart."

It was Saturday night, with some of the sea-shore customs the family had brought with them, for the beans were already baked and the corn-bread was biding its time in the outdoor oven. Sunday noisily dawned for Theophilus, with the Captain's "Tumble up there, tumble up!" to the children. The sea-going order soon brought them all on deck, ready for breakfast and the day. Every face shone with expectation and soft water. The Captain had sat down before the hearth, looked up chimney and shaved; it sounded like a man mowing oats. He put on his blue broad-bottomed trousers, gave an extra hitch to the waistbands, and took up another hole in his belt, — he never could be persuaded to wear suspenders, — his collar lay over, an extra Byronic breadth, the neckerchief was tied in a true sailor's knot, and his new tarpaulin shone like a black earthen teapot, — altogether so thoroughly presentable a sea-dog that Neptune would have passed him across the Line without parley.

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CHAPTER XX.

GOING TO MEETING. — A STORM AND A SERMON.

HE was ready for meeting, but he had a wooden bowl of salt in his hand. "Come, Theophilus, I 'm going to salt the sheep and count noses. Go along? Two things, I notice, many farmers do that are professors, — they steal three or four hours of God's time and sleep it off, and they salt their sheep and cattle Sunday. Neighbor Folsom, just over yonder, has about thirty sheep. Monday, Tuesday, or any other week-day, they don't mind him at all; but when he shows himself Sunday, they bear down upon him like a swarm of Barbary corsairs. If they don't know the Sabbath by name, they know it by salt. Sheep are silly things, but it looks as if they can almost count, — up to seven at least."

They were in the big pasture with a skirting of timber for shade, and a runlet making capital S's along for drink.

"Do you see those four stumps? They are bluebird stumps. Every spring the birds come and take possession. Every girl and boy has standing orders. Those birds are as safe as if they were in heaven."

By this time, sheep, cattle, and horses, hastening from every quarter, greeted the Captain in their

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respective dialects. It looked in a small way as if the beasts of the earth were coming to Adam a second time to be named. Some of them snuffed the stranger threateningly, and he stepped modestly behind the Captain. He hardly knew which he feared most, heels, horns, or teeth. The air was almost sultry; there was a sound like the pedal-bass of a distant organ. The Captain looked up: "There 's *another* sort of sheep, Theophilus — see that mackerel-back sky? It 's a weather-breeder."

All the family piled into the big wagon but two girls, who rode a couple of light-heeled ponies constantly kicking at nothing. The church was severely plain; the pews had doors that squeaked pitifully, like petulant children, if you touched them; a long, two-story grain-bin of a pulpit was surmounted with a broad ledge for Bible, hymn-books, lamps, a water-pitcher, and the Sunday-school library. The lower story of the pulpit was the church wood-house; the next story was reached by a hidden stair, and when the minister sat he disappeared. The "deacons' seat" was under the eaves of the pulpit; and the "darkies' seat" was away in one corner, and a long distance from the stove. Everything was as bare as a board, and nothing was upholstered but some of the people. When the organization was completely manned and officered, the sexton sat by the stove, — the sexton that built fires, dug graves for a dollar apiece, and swept the building so vigorously that the dust scared up from the floor was afraid to come

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down, and what did venture back, left the building fully equipped for penitential purposes, except a few yards of sackcloth. Only the pulpit was painted, and a very dead white at that, setting off a black mitt and a green veil pinned on its front to catch the owner's eye. The atmosphere, in addition to its standard elements, contained a trace of last Sunday's bread and butter, with which waiting children beguiled the time after sermon until Sunday school was called.

The people were moving slowly in, and Theophilus fell into line and was piloted to a seat by the Captain. If eyes had been pistols and glances bullets, Theophilus would have been perforated like a pepper-box. The neighborhood knew the young schoolmaster was coming, and now they saw him.

People sat where they pleased; in Western parlance, they were squatters. The Lord owned every pew in the place, for the people built it and gave it to Him, and there was no distraining for rent.

A long, open shed, with mangers, flanked the church, where worshippers sheltered and often fed their horses, for many came six and eight miles to meeting. Worshippers' ways are different now, and coachmen in their mourning hats drive slowly up and down before the church and gossip with their fellows. They must get gospel truth by induction.

A rattle of wheels rolling into the shed, and in a minute the clergyman entered, horsewhip in hand, and set it up in the corner. A man with Christian character set like a seal upon his face, he walked

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slowly up the aisle, grasping extended hands along the way, answering the morning greetings, patting a little child upon the head; but all quietly, as if there were somebody asleep in the house. Let us hope there was, — that the world's vexatious cares were asleep; that empty vanity was asleep, and all the vulgar prides and passions.

The Captain introduced his young friend, who rose and ripened like a cherry, as if the clergyman's genial smile had warmed him up uncomfortably. The minister disappeared for a season. The deacon gave a tuning-fork a little bite with his teeth, and put it to his ear. The minister reappeared, read a psalm, gave out the hymn, —

"There is a land of pure delight,"

the deacon took another bite, rose, said "sing 'Jordan,'" and the singers stood up in their places and launched the sweet old tune. And it *was* sweet indeed. The deacon had been a singing-master in his time, his voice unbroken, the soft cadences of the women, the true accord of the girls, — altogether it surprised and delighted Theophilus. This ended, a prayer followed; then,

"Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,"

to the tune "Amsterdam," then in its hundredth year.

Before they reached the last line, —

"And earth exchanged for heaven," —

a thick veil was drawn over the face of day, the church grew dark with a cloudy twilight, the winds sprang up

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from ambush, and muffled growls as of waking lions rolled around the horizon. Hardly had the clergyman announced his text, "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice. . . . His lightnings enlightened the world; the earth saw, and trembled," than darkness fell on the congregation, instant as a storm in the tropics. And then, as if Nature had come to illustrate the text, the lightnings, blue, red, and fiercest white, glared in at the uncurtained windows upon the appalled congregation. The sky was full of zigzag cracks, like a broken bell; the thunders jolted the solid world; the roaring of the woods, the splintering of stricken trees, the avalanches of thunder tumbling upon the ground, hushed the human voice to whispers, and the text was the end of the sermon. Children hid their faces, men shielded their eyes with both hands, tearless women shrank and shivered with every blow of the thunder. Whoever said "noise is the wail of weakness," never witnessed a Michigan September storm in the old time.

The Captain at the first rush of rain instinctively put on his tarpaulin and sat imperturbable as the wooden figure-head of his old ship "Nautilus." Suddenly, amid the gathered gloom, rent and torn by the lightnings, he struck up Tallis's "Evening Hymn,"—

> "All praise to Thee, my God, this night,
> For all the blessings of the light;"

and every tongue that could sing a note joined in, glad of something to do in the strained suspense.

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It was a poetic thought thus to fit in the "Evening Hymn" with the darkness of storm instead of night.

The effect was touching and sublime. It was like a brave bird beaten down by the tempest, roared down by the thunder, managing to make itself heard now and then, as its song rose through the buffeting elements and was not drowned.

There was a lull. The cloudy batteries were rolling over the horizon's edge, and the clergyman, who had stood leaning on the pulpit ledge, said, — the Captain snapped his hat off as if it had been a percussion-cap, — "Brethren and Friends, there has been preaching enough for one day. We are safe anywhere, in the hands of God the Father. The direction of the bolt is determined before it leaves the cloud. The Lord opens His hand and it escapes; He closes His hand and it is harmless as a ray of — "

Through a rifted cloud burst a blaze of sunshine and finished the sentence.

"There is little left for me to say, for, before the day is done, some eyes shall see the bow of promise, the seal of the covenant sure and steadfast. As every one beholds a different rainbow, — his own and not another's, — so each has his individual promises, and thus is raised to the unspeakable dignity of being 'the party of the second part' in a compact of love and mercy wherein the Lord of all worlds is the First.

"We have had a sermon from Mount Sinai to-day, and the sermon from the Mount of Configuration and Grace is begun.

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"Some of you, no doubt, have just ended an hour of mortal fear; but at that pleasant smile from Heaven it lifted like a cloud that is gone, — like a night that has fled away. You did not go forth to meet the swift arrows of death, but abode here in this humblest of God's sanctuaries.

"More than two hundred years ago, a Christian poet said, —

> 'I will go searching till I find a sun
> Shall stay till we have done;
> A willing shiner that shall shine as gladly
> As frost-nipped suns look sadly.'

The Declaration of Independence enumerates the common rights of man as 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' I think the poet and the statesman are both wrong. Happiness is not pursued, — it is not overtaken; it is here in our hearts and lives, if it is at all. The sun is not searched for; it is the light whereby we search.

"Abide ye, therefore, at the post of duty, however wild the weather, that when the days grow short and dark we may all pray at the last, —

> 'Abide with me! Fast falls the eventide;
> The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide!
> When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
> Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!'
>
> AMEN."

And the little congregation sang the Doxology and went out.

Went out into the sunshine full-jewelled with raindrops, — out into the sweet air, pure as if

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no creature had ever breathed it. But the traces of "the ethereal touch" were not wanting. Thirty oaks had been struck within a mile, — some split and splintered as with wedges and axes; some showing a narrow white scar the whole length of their bodies. There were two trees, perhaps ten rods apart; from one of them the bark was stripped *down* and lay about its foot, but not detached, as if his rags had fallen off a beggar as he stood. A little furrow that might have been traced by a lady's finger ran the ten rods to the base of the second tree, and the creature that made it flashed *up* the tree, rent the bark into long tatters as it went, but left them hanging from its shoulders, so to say, like another beggar yet in his clothes, — up and out again into the all-containing air.[1]

A little group stood talking. "A good sermon Elder Dodge gave us to-day; short, though," said one.

"Yes; but he had the mightiest kind of help, I should say," said another.

"It's my opinion that a good many of us were pretty plastic before the sermon proper began," put in the Captain. "The blacksmith's sledge-hammer arm would be of little use without the wind and the fire. Yes, most of us could have been made over with a *tack*-hammer; but it *was* a good — Mr. Trent, what would be the word for a very brief sermon?"

"Sermonette, perhaps," he replied.

[1] A fact.

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"Well, the Lord left him so little to do, he did n't have time to *spindle*. I enjoy a rattling rain, but I do despise a *drizzle*. 'Strike while the iron is hot' is an old maxim, but it 's only half true because it 's only half the truth. Strike while the iron is hot and then *stop* striking, seems to me furnishes the missing blade to the shears."

Coming up just in time to catch the last sentence, the clergyman said, "It seems to me quite as good a rule for making sermons as horseshoes;" and they dropped the subject.

Going home, the Captain confessed that once or twice in the height of the storm he wished he was in his lookout; but when, a minute after, he saw the lookout strown about the premises like kindling-wood, he added, "What a wicked wish it was! This Sunday blow has laid out my Monday's work. When I get the new one up, I'll just clap on fore-and-aft and back stays. One stay is worth a keg of nails."

There were signs on Sunday night of a coming Monday. The table was set for breakfast, and there were busy steps in the kitchen; but at an early hour the crew turned in; and the Captain and his "supercargo," as he quite inaptly dubbed Theophilus, went out upon deck.

"There 's the end of the Elder's sermon," said the Captain, pointing to a pale lunar rainbow; then he blew his last whiff, and host and guest followed the crew.

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CHAPTER XXI.

MONDAY MORNING. — MURDER AND A PISTOL. — CAPTAIN JOB'S VALEDICTORY. — AN ENCOUNTER WITH A NICE FAMILY.

"GOOD-MORNING!" and the little world was awake. Monday morning in that household was like the starting of an old-time mill. The gate is lifted; with a rush the stream of secular life begins to flow, the great wheel turns, the shafts revolve, the palsied hoppers shake their hollowed hands, and even the quiet little buckets along the leathern bands begin to run "upstairs, downstairs, in my lady's chamber." The household were scattered abroad; barn, field, school, cellar, chamber, garden, each had its representative; the first mate cared for the cabin-boy, and the Captain was rebuilding his lookout.

Theophilus had the freedom of the city, and was enjoying it; and it was his last half-day of it, for he must leave at noon. He was not sad. Very young men are not capable of genuine sadness; they are only sorry. Neither have they much ability for regretting. There are "childish things" behind them, but what a gigantic world in prospect! He looked up and saw the Captain hurrying across the field from the woods, his tarpaulin swinging in one hand, and

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violently mopping his face with a red bandana. He passed Theophilus, as if it needed a microscope to see him, rushed through the doorway to a cupboard, snatched out a huge horse-pistol, loaded and primed it in hot haste as if an enemy were at his heels, and burst out, —

"Deborah, that hired man at Stimson's has just done a murder in cold blood."

"*W'y*, Captain Job!"

"Harvey's dogs got after a deer and chased him near to death. That criminal was cutting a tree in the woods, and the poor fool of a deer, fearing the four-footed brutes more than the two-footed one, ran right toward the man, fell down panting at his feet, actually prayed to him to save him, and what 'd he DO? Just brained the trusting creature with his bloody axe. He 's as bad as a Malay or a China Sea pirate."

"But, Captain Job, what are you going to do with that pistol?"

"I 'm going to lame his right arm for him, so he 'll never swing another axe."

"But," said his wife, putting a loving hand on his shoulder, "what if you should happen to kill him, — saying nothing about the sin of it, — and anything should happen to you, Captain Job, what would become of the first mate and the cabin-boy?"

The Captain kissed her by way of answer.

"Now, put up that rusty old iron; there 's more danger at *your* end of it than there is at the muzzle of it."

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Hauling down colors is not very inspiring business, especially if you do it yourself; but the Captain gave a half-laugh as she said, "So put it up, get your pipe, and take a smoke on it."

"Wifey, you're right; but I hope if the Stimson family eat a ration of that venison it'll *pizen* them, and if *he* eats it it'll half kill him. If that's murder, make the most of it." And having blazed and fumed, he only smoked — tobacco!

Some reader may call that couple "unequally yoked." I do not, but the rather that it was God's own good providence for both of them.

The Captain kept the clock thirty minutes faster than his neighbors, for he hated a stern-chase. At high noon the conch blew, and the family gathered round the table in close order. The children were too busy to talk. The Captain said little, Theophilus less. It seemed to him he was looking his last upon that unbroken household. He hoped it was something he had eaten in the morning; low spirits often come from below.

When he was ready to go, the family swarmed out to the gate with him. A boy climbed upon the back of each pony, two girls scrambled into the wagon. It mattered little to them who came or went.

"I don't think, Theophilus," said the Captain, "you will stay in Bodkins long. If you do, you'll draw too much water to get over the bar and put to sea; and that is n't the kind of port you ought to lay up in.

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"You won't be there, and we — perhaps we won't be here. Such shy boys as you, are pretty sure to marry young; and then you 'll have new friends and new owners, and the chances are all dead ahead that you 'll never make this port again. I trust you will, — we all do.

"I hope you 'll have good weather most of times, and pleasant v'yages, but not overly good, — just now and then a saucy gale you did n't whistle for. It 'll blow a man's conceit clear of the bolt-ropes, and the dust out of his heart; for hearts will get dusty sometimes before they quit beating. A fair-weather sailor belongs on a canal-boat.

"But we must n't keep you till the tide turns. We are none of us the 'Flying Dutchman,' and we don't want to be. There 's a Harbor of Rest somewhere. There 's an 'Old Ship Zion' they sing about. They 'll send a boat for us when the Great Captain is ready; but till such time, to help a friend or confound an enemy, may you always have a spare shot in the locker.

"Good-by — good-by; so say we all." And with a wring of the hand Theophilus set off, the red lines across his fingers as if a hawk had had him. The last sound he heard was the small pipe of the cabin-boy, — "by-e;" and the last he saw of them, the Captain whirled his tarpaulin and the first mate shouldered the baby.

It was a genial day, — the ardor of summer subdued but not gone. Horses stood in fence-corners

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and nodded; sheep were shaving the lean pastures; a donkey, with the look of having been whitewashed and exposed too soon to the weather, was delicately manipulating a green thistle with his tongue; crafty woodpeckers were knocking at dead trees and listening if any unsuspecting body was at home; crows spattered ink-blots along the clean air in their oblique flight; gophers, earless as seals, scurried into hollow logs with a *chick-a-chicker;* birds were making the thistle-feathers fly, squirrels dashing along the zigzags of rail-fences with butternuts as big as their heads; a young schoolma'am was clucking in her brood with a tea-bell; the pumpkins showed gold through the wrinkled russet of the corn. It was a restful and thoughtful kind of day.

After a two-hours uneventful ride he saw a lazy smoke lifting above the bushes, and came suddenly upon a canvas-covered wagon drawn up beside the road. A dog that evidently walked in his ribs lay tied under the rear axle, a manger like a ship's boat was slung up behind, a span of sleek-coated horses were eating dinner, and some pet poultry were picking up the fallen corn. The family were lounging on the ground. A pair of oxen were foraging about with impatient pullings at the connecting yoke, for they were not of the same mind. One sees a clump of herbage, the other a broad-leaved plant; each wants his own, and neither gets it.

The family were gathered about a fire whereon a coffee-kettle boiled; a long rifle leaned against a tree,

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and powder-horn and shot-bag were slung over the muzzle; a busy woman served out cold meat in solid geometry, and bread in plane, to the hungry brood; a much mussed and bedraggled rooster in a coop set up his noon crow in a listless way. The man was lank, long, and black-muzzled; the woman was a match, and the children of both sexes shaggy and overgrown.

Theophilus was driving by, when "Say, stranger!" brought him up. It was the man who hailed. "Don't you want some blackberr's?" As the man spoke, a horse neighed; and looking round, Theophilus discovered a splendid hunter, saddled and bridled and partly hidden in the bushes. Theophilus declined to purchase; but the man strode out to the wagon, put one foot on the rim of a wheel with great ease and deliberation, looked the young man over as if he proposed to buy him, took an inventory, saw a chain, inferred a watch, saw a ring, — inference, gold, — and said, "I'm frum Old Kanetuck; whar *you* frum?"

Then he looked up and down the road, took a fierce bowie-knife from his boot-leg, flung it open with a jerk, and lazily picked his teeth with the blade, while thrust in a belt under his coat, a pistol protruded. Theophilus had no weapon but a penknife and a toothpick.

"I allow you'll take them berr's, stranger, at two dollar; there's 'bout a bush'l, and they're as big as thimbles. You'll *take* 'em. Nance, bring 'em!"

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It was plainly a case of highway robbery served up with blackberry trimming. Theophilus's trained ear did not fancy the sinister intonation of that "You 'll *take* 'em." It was neither question nor request, but a downright order. It looked as if that bushel of fruit would be a costly purchase,—how costly he dared not think. It was a mile to the last house, and how far to the next he did not know. It was a desperate case. Life and property both seemed in jeopardy. He knew the man for one of those land pirates that under the guise of emigration infested the country, slyly pilfering, boldly robbing, and not always staying their hands from bloodshed.

He thought an instant, the man picking his teeth and watching him. Suddenly, as by the flash of a camera, he saw a picture,—a house a thousand miles away, a youth standing upon the stone steps ready for a journey, a mother hastening after him, unregarded tears falling down her cheeks. She had already bidden him good-by, but she had forgotten something. "Here, Theophilus," she said, "is a little package of something that you may need in that new country; wherever you go, have it handy." He put it in his pocket; another Godspeed and he was gone. The original was a year old, but the picture a single instant. He had always obeyed her; wherever he went, the snug little package went also.

Even in his peril he gave a queer little smile, which had his watcher observed, would have disturbed the assured air he wore of being master of the situation.

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"Well!" said the man impatiently.

"In a minute," replied the youth, as he opened the little satchel by his side, took out and carefully untied a snug package.

"Bank bills," thought the delighted ruffian.

"Can you make change?" asked Theophilus.

"No matter about the change," returned the man; "hand it over." The fellow showed his colors.

Theophilus said quick as a flash, and in a desperate way, "Well, if you don't mean to be particular, take it all;" and a double handful of something like a gust of red sand in a simoon struck the man full in the face and eyes. He made a wild plunge for Theophilus, yelled like scalper and scalped in duet, staggered helplessly, groaning, cursing, and roaring for water as never before in his life. Nance kicked over the kettle and hurried to his relief, catching up in her fright a basin of scalding water and dashing it into his face; the dog under the wagon threw up his head and howled; the woman screamed; the man writhed and raved.

Theophilus was forgotten, but he forgave the indifference, and remembering the rifle, dropped to the floor of the wagon, and for the first time in his life lashed the horses with frantic energy. Nance hurled a burning brand, which frightened the ponies and was a blessing, — a torch of liberty to the young man. The oldest girl threw a hatchet like an Indian; the father shouted, "Nance, give the devil a *shot!*"

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Theophilus was not too far off to hear it, and shrunk like a shrivelled filbert, — not too far off to hear (*ping!*) the whistle of a bullet through the wagon-top. Safe! safe! unless they pursued with the saddle-horse. Would they think of it? and what then?

The frightened team went at a swinging gallop, like artillery horses pulling a gun into range in a crisis of battle.

The sharp clatter of hoofs behind him sent the blood to his heart. His singular ammunition was exhausted. He leaned out and gave a quick look; it was one of the girls astride like a trooper. She gained on him at every jump. On a little broken bridge her horse stumbled and fell, while the rider struck upon her feet. The cavalry was turned into infantry, and the trooper into a barefoot girl.

Theophilus, well out of pistol-shot, halted and watched. The horse did not get up; he had evidently broken a leg. The girl promptly shot the suffering animal. The bullet meant for Theophilus became a messenger of mercy. The girl threw herself down beside the horse, flung an arm across his neck, and was evidently weeping, and Theophilus, perhaps not strangely, felt a throb of sympathy for the wayward and wicked mourner. Rising the next moment, she stripped the dead body of saddle and bridle, shouldered them, and slowly retraced her steps.

He fancied the scene at the little encampment on her return, — her father's anger, perhaps his blows, —

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and half wished he could carry the saddle for her. A queer fellow was Theophilus.

And a thoughtful mother's pungent gift had saved him, not from a cough, but a coffin, if indeed that last luxury would not have been denied him. He would write that mother to-morrow.

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CHAPTER XXII.

A FIGHT. — A CAPTURE. — THEOPHILUS SUSPECTED OF MURDER, AND PRONOUNCED A HERO.

A GROUP of horsemen came clattering down the road toward Theophilus. It proved to be a sheriff and five deputies, and two of them carried lariats at their saddle-bows. They pulled up and asked in great haste if he had seen an emigrant wagon drawn by a span of fine horses, anywhere. He thought he had, and said so.

"Did you see a yoke of oxen and a fine saddle-horse with the party?"

He told more of the story. Everybody was excited. The oxen had been stolen across the State Line, as also the horse. The party had broken into a house and robbed the inmates at the point of the pistol, and it was a girl that seemed the most daring and desperate of the gang.

Theophilus told the whole of the story, the officers putting spurs to their horses galloped away, and Theophilus, ashamed of his momentary sympathy with the girl desperado, drove on. Several pistol-shots and the crack of a rifle disturbed his serenity, and he knew the hunters had encountered their game. His anxiety became too painful for endurance, so he

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drove on to a wide place in the road, wheeled about, and returned.

He had gone less than a mile when a cavalcade came in sight. There was the great wagon; one of the posse drove the horses, another the oxen, and a third carried the long rifle; the remaining three rode beside the wagon, pistols in hand. They halted. "There 's that devil of a boy!" screamed a girl from the wagon, glaring at him like a tiger-cat. There were abundant evidences of the engagement. One of the deputies had a bandaged hand, a second carried one arm in a sling, the sheriff himself had a hole in the top of his hat about right for a bee to go in at.

But the outlaws had the worst of it. Nance lay in the wagon with a wound in the shoulder; one of the girls was shot through the wrist; as for the man, he was blinded and helpless; the rest — two boys and a girl — were tied hand and foot with halters. As Theophilus looked in, they reminded him of a captured wolf and her whelps he had once seen, — the same sullen, restless shifting of the eyes, the same visible snarl about the retracted lips. They were gamy animals, and their reputations were gamy also. The old black-muzzled wolf heard Theophilus's voice replying to an officer's question, and in a whining growl said, —

"Won't the youngster shake hands in sign that he lets bygones *be* bygones?" And the young man was about climbing out and complying with this most Christian request, — possibly attempt to shake one of the girl's manacled hands, who would have bitten him

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like a catamount if he had, — when the sheriff stopped him.

"Don't do it. If he gets you within reach he 'll give you the hug of a bear, break your bones, and kill you, before we could rescue you. His feet are tied, but he begged so, we left his hands free to hold a wet cloth to his face, — a horrible thing, looks like raw meat. If you don't want a dream full of nightmares, turn the other way."

The wolf gave a snarl of disappointed vengeance, the teacher wheeled into line between the wagon and the oxen, and in this guise the uncouth procession moved on toward the village of Canaan.

Evidently the whole country was roused. A schoolhouse emptied its contents bodily, schoolma'am and all, into the road; women stood leaning on gates and bars; men came running across the fields; rumors filled the air like dandelion-down.

Two of the deputies had fallen back a little and rode each side of Theophilus to chat. The schoolma'am recognized him, and it was buzzed about — sweet girl, that teacher! — that the Principal of Bodkins High School was in the hands of the sheriff, and children ran away from school to tell the news. It grew. By the time they sighted little Canaan, half the population was swarming out to meet them.

It was rumored that Theophilus had murdered an entire family — some added that they were Christian people, and they had the bodies in a covered wagon; that it took six men to arrest the monster, and they

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only effected it after two of the officers had been shot. Had the story run that it took six elephants to catch a mouse, it would not have been more absurd. Everybody eyed the poor fellow. There were much subdued talk and sly pointing of fingers. Theophilus was the chief villain. The deputies, much amused, told him the misapprehension, and his annoyance was more painful than a pistol-shot.

Then the crowd, getting more *used* to him, grew a little bolder, walked close beside his wagon, and made audible comments.

"He don't *look* like such a man."

"He can't be twenty years old."

"He looks guilty, though. See how red and kinder spotted he turns."

In the midst of this pleasant talk, and just before they filed up to the tavern, Theophilus turned his ponies out of line.

"See! see! He 's trying to get away! Head him off!" and several men and boys zealously rushed to seize the horses. It was getting too much for him, and he laughed — well, he laughed as a corpse might.

"How can he laugh?" said one. "What a diabolical laugh it was!" cried another.

"Oh, Jem!" screamed a woman with an apron over her head, whose husband was eager to help catch the escaping wretch, "he may shoot you or suthin!"

Theophilus had just determined to leap out, make for the tavern and hide, when the sheriff shouted,

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"Is everybody in and about Canaan crazy, I wonder! This young gentleman is the very one whose courage and quick-wittedness made the arrest of that wagon-load of reprobates possible without serious loss of life. He disabled the big rascal of the lot before we got up with them."

"Hurrah, 'rah!" roared a dozen of his persecutors. How many people have shingle-rooster relatives on the barn ridges!

How immaculately white and wonderfully heroic he seemed to everybody then; and they stared at him all the more, but with respect and admiration.

One good-looking young woman said, "I wonder if he's married! But that can't be, he's too young yet." Theophilus had mounted the tenth wave of Canaan popularity, and as a sequel he had four pupils from the Canaan neighborhood the next term because he was such a hero. How inconsequentially good or evil falls into line sometimes in the affairs of life.

A doctor was summoned, the family driven to the jail and secured for the night, while Theophilus told his capsicum achievement twice to a crowded bar-room, and drank two glasses of cider at the public expense. It was altogether a captivating account.

After supper a new throng gathered at the tavern, and it was proposed to the hero that he should repeat the story in the tavern ball-room. They could pack it, they said, and would take up a collection, and it would "a good deal more 'n pay his bill, they'd

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guarantee." The hero turned his back upon this new opening vista to fame and fortune, and stolidly went to bed.

Pause and consider what careers that young man narrowly escaped setting forth upon: a lecturer when that article was not as common as may-weed; a detective officer who should rival High Constable Hays of old New York fame; the husband of that inquiring young woman, and the milker of cows night and morning even until now. "Address, T. Trent, Dairyman, Canaan Post-office." A three-tined route in life was before him, — a trident of opportunities; but he turned from all, paid the reckoning next morning, all but the breakfast, which the landlord declared he would n't take a cent for, — just about what it was worth, too, — saying, —

"I sold so many extra drinks on the strength of your being here last night, that the profit of 'em would pay for six breakfasts."

Theophilus did not fancy the idea of being drank into a free breakfast by the general public, and he gave the rejected twenty-five cents to the landlord's boy. Things repeat themselves curiously as the years go by, and it is right they should, — *good* things, such as make for the greatest of the three, which is Charity.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

A SHADOW ON THE WALL. — A DAINTY NOTE. — HOME AGAIN.

THE tavern was a pine palace not altogether finished, and because of it Theophilus had an experience. He had sought his bed with ceremony as scant as his garments, wearied less with the travel than the excitement of the day, having passed three phases, — his life in danger, himself a murderer, a hero, and a public benefactor.

Hardly had he blown out the light, — he did it with his thumb and finger, — when he noticed the wall of the room opposite the bed was faintly luminous, as if covered with phosphorescent paint. Soon a human shadow flitted along the wall at a dancing step. Then it stood in profile, shook down a long mane and ran it over its fingers and with lifted arms began to wind it in a great coil. Theophilus felt his pulse to see if he could count. He was a little afraid for his wits. He crept stealthily toward the wall, bound to solve the mystery. He tumbled a chair over with a crash upon the naked floor, and the figure noiselessly turned and faced him, without the creak of a shoe, and was motionless.

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The young man was puzzled. He thrust out his hand with nervous haste and touched the wall. It yielded a little, and he struck the shadow a smart blow upon the shoulder. It gave a little cry, half scream, half laugh, and it and the phosphorescent illumination vanished together, while the chair, reciprocating the treatment he had given it, tumbled *him* over backward upon the floor. The walls were of cotton cloth and the rooms were all lanterns! He heard a laugh, as if smothered like the little princes in the Tower with a pillow, and caressing an offended elbow, groped his way back to bed and dropped asleep.

He never thought of the incident again until on his way to Bodkins. Then it returned to him, and he puzzled himself to remember just where he set his candle, and whether he could possibly have been between it and the wall. Then he banished it as a silly trifle; but back it came like a troublesome fly, and brought two more with it: "Did she think him guilty of intentional impertinence and a vulgar trick? Could she have known him as the occupant of the room?" They worried him like three gnats.

Wheels rattled up behind him, and a lady, fair to see, quickly passed, gave him a full-face look and a roguish smile and extinguished him altogether. He had ended a nervous day by making himself ridiculous at night.

Theophilus reached home without further misadventure, and the little village smiled. Friendly greetings were accorded on every hand, and he was again

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ready for school duties. Having left no girl behind him, his first call was the post-office. It was a very large world then. Vast spaces of time and miles sundered kindred and fast friends. Tidings from New York were like bean porridge, — "best when nine days old;" but hot or cold, the letters were eagerly welcomed. If the news was joyful, then they were ashamed of their repining and discontent, while even then a blessing was on the way; if bad, they had less time to be sorry. Friends died and were buried, and the tide of living cares drifted the thought of them out of sight if not out of mind before the letters came with the tidings.

Among the letters received about this time was one postmarked Detroit, smelling of violets, and dainty as a butterfly. Opening it, he saw leading off the lines his own name, style, and title. It ran thus: —

DETROIT, Sept. 20, 18—.

THEOPHILUS TRENT, A. B.,
Principal of Bodkins High School.

DEAR SIR, — I have learned that those who live in lanterns should put out the light. Have you?

You will find the injunction in Shakespeare. Strange we both forgot it. "Put out the light and then —" A wonderful creature, that Shakespeare! Was he ever in Bodkins, do you think?

THE TENANT OF THE OTHER LANTERN.

P. S. If people must live in lanterns, let them put the light out — *side*.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

KEEPING HOUSE. — SIX BURGLARS. — A POLITICAL GALE. — A MASS MEETING. — THEOPHILUS'S OWL SAVES HIM.

PASSING over the interval crowded with the incidents already related of daily life in Bodkins, we next meet Mr. and Mrs. Trent under their own vine and fig-tree; which, translated, means a small white cottage with not sufficient tree to make a riding-whip; and as for vine, it was a potato-vine in the garden, that had come up without invitation. A cosset — a present, not to say exactly a bridal gift — had the range of the garden spot, and its short coat was regularly decorated with burdock-burs, — the gardener's report, — and were as regularly removed by Mrs. Theophilus, who kept strict account of the profits. How peculiarly prosaic and bucolic it all was, and yet how amusing to remember!

The school thrived, but the young ladies discontinued their little gifts of flowers, and now and then a choice cake or an imported apple. Their interest in him, outside the human abstraction called a teacher, had wilted, — not that any one had ever wanted him, but that he had wanted and won somebody else.

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Meanwhile various culinary experiments enlivened the realm of domestic affairs. For an instance, it was not found that dry beans would bake, like potatoes, to mastication point, nor yet that able onions and new milk make good neighbors. The milk might please the Egyptians, but not the Trents.

Theophilus developed artistic talent, and frescoed the fence with whitewash, — one of his eyes likewise. When it dried, the premises looked from a distance as if edged with a clean white collar. The proprietors went to the top of a commanding hill to note the effect.

One night, soon after, they were awakened by a subdued sound of sawing.

"What 's that?" in simultaneous whisper.

"Somebody trying to get into the house. Hear them sawing!"

Rasp, rasp, rasp.

Theophilus was all ear and a little tongue.

"Yes, they are sawing a hole through the clapboards."

Rasp, rasp.

"What will you do?"

There was not an offensive weapon in the house, except two papers of pins and needles and a bottle of hartshorn.

"Theof, they seem to be sawing the other wall now; maybe they are going to saw the house *d-o-w-n!* Pull back the curtain a little and look out, — there 's a moon; but shut your eyes, or the burglar 'll see them shine and shoot you with the — pshaw!"

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Theophilus felt like laughing, but the situation was too grave. He went to the window, looked out, and whispered, —

"There 's more than one — there 's *six!*"

"What *shall* we do?"

"*Six cows licking the fence for the salt in the white-wash!*"

Just then the village roosters began to crow midnight, and Theophilus and his whole family laughed so loud and long that a querulous woman next door complained that Miss Trent had a large party the night before, and carried on till twelve o'clock, and she never slept a wink. There is, in the worst of times, a few grains of truth in every ton of talk, but it hardly pays to smelt it.

A great political storm was sweeping the whole country; and Theophilus, though innocent of any partisan wit as his unborn brother, was, because of his being college-bred, beardless, and never having done anything good or bad but teach school, pressed into his country's service as a pocket expounder of political wisdom, and harnessed in with a stout old team to do *colt* work; namely, rear and kick in a rhetorical way at two or three mass-meetings, while the rest of the turn-out did the pulling. His subject was banking and finance at large. It usually happens that the man who is incapable of transacting his own business thinks himself sufficiently gifted to be Secretary of the Treasury. To do him justice, Theophilus did not think so, and he consented against his better judgment.

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Those Michigan mass-meetings were something wonderful. A central point in a county was selected, speakers from abroad were announced, — some of them so remarkable that a detail of exclamation-points doing escort duty followed their names, even as the multitudes followed the owners. One man could throw a crowd into convulsions by the eloquent lift and drop of his right eyelid. Another told pointed stories and shot pointed arrows that would have fattened Momus, the god of raillery, himself. A third swung the heavy hammer of argument, a ponderous man with a ponderous way, — they thought his reasoning solid because he was solid himself, — and every time he struck a blow at the other party the old men nodded and ejaculated as if he had hit every one of them on the back of the head; and the young men "made eyes" at the girls, waiting for that young fellow to begin, — "Maybe he won't begin, only sing." Theophilus was "helper" to the mighty smith, and ran after the sparks he made, and pleased the girls. He was n't the organ, and not exactly the monkey, but he was sufficiently amusing.

What scenes they were, there in the Michigan oak openings! Thousands of men, women, and children, carts, carriages, wagons, gigs, and saddle-horses, all "rounded up" as the cowboys say, on Western Plains, about the stand, or a high wagon with a platform upon it, draped with bunting. Men and boys perched in trees above it where they could look down the backs of the speakers' necks; women and

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children piled in the wagons into pyramids of heads, each face, like the moon's, turned one way; a huge hay-rack upholstered with quilts and blankets, drawn up near the stand, creaked beneath the weight of the Thirteen Colonies and the rest of the Union, in the guise of village and country maidens in red, white, and blue, who sang sometimes and smiled all times. How proud that old rack should have been of its burden! Only a month ago it rocked with the crowded sheaves of the bearded grain, and now it is holding "the flowers that grew between." And how proud those four horses should be, with rosettes below their ears, and a sprout of flag between their ears, — sober horses that the drums and fifes put more life into than four bushels of oats could!

Up before day, many of them, packing lunch-baskets, setting houses in order, donning their other clothes; six miles afoot, ten miles with oxen, fifteen miles with horses; up from the hollows, down from the hills, — all the roads to the valley were filled with vehicles and lined with footmen, a flutter of flags and glitter of badges along the motley caravan. Here a cosey log-cabin on wheels, there a load of barrels, and a banner aloft with the legend, —

"And drink hard cider, too."

Yonder a johnny-cake as large as a small garden-spot is borne in state.

It looked as if the very wilderness had been summer-fallowed and partisans had sprung up like weeds in

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the furrows. The whole country was fired. Pictures of foxes on barn-doors meant the sage of Kinderhook, pictures of nightcapped grannies on wall and fence meant the hero of Tippecanoe. Log-cabins were rolled up, cider-barrels rolled out, flags floated from barn gables; boys fought boys to compel one another to hurrah for the man he knew his father would vote against; engaged couples fell out because of Old Tip or Little Van; aged men cheered for "Old Hickory" and meant "young," cheered for "cider too" and meant Harrison. Shouts, cheers, hurrahs flew like sparks from a blacksmith's forge.

Songs? The country was filled with them as midges fill the summer sunbeams. From fields and woods, between the clink of hammers, above the sound of flails, in among the drums, off among the bugles, —

"What has caused this great commotion, motion, motion the country through?"

What *had*, indeed?

"Van, Van 's a used-up man."

"For Tippecanoe and Tyler too."

"Rumsey Dumpsy, who killed Tecumseh?"

and so it really went "the country through."

Some people came to a sort of resurrection. Fifers that fifed for Jackson now blew the horn for Van; drummers that drummed for Harrison sat on the stage — at least one of them did — and beat the long roll before Theophilus was to appear, and the tears

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rolled down the player's withered cheeks, and down the cheeks of some old men around the stand, and some women began to cry, and a man beside himself with enthusiasm, or something, jumped up, whirled his hat, and cried "Three cheers for —"

"The *devil!*" shouted a political enemy.

"Well, you cheer for your candidate and I will for mine," retorted the cheer-master; while the president of the day, amid the tumult, wished to introduce the young man, and said "Trent." Somebody caught it up, and yelled "Three cheers for Trent!" and Trent it was. Theophilus said long after that he never thought of those cheers that glanced off and hit him, but he remembered the old pompous announcement of *nothing*, "In the name of the Prophet — figs!" and that he shrank so at the absurdity of the thing that he did not regain his stature until he was half through his speech, his growth being retarded by opposition cries of, — "Where's your ma?" "If you live you'll be a voter in four or five years." "Don't run round in the crowd, sonny, you'll git trod on."

These taunts were tonic. He broke through the fence of his written speech like a wild steer through a cane-brake; he declared that "blackguards were blacklegs who brought poor money where good money was not safe, and blacklegs were those, there or anywhere, whom the coat fitted; that those who pretended to think him criminal because he was not born before the discovery of America might have conferred a favor upon their neighbors if they had thought of it

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in time and never been born at all; and that, for his part, he had been born long enough to know that one young chicken is worth more than a tree-full of old owls;" in all of which, while he showed some ability as blackguard himself, his "owl" brought down the crowd. It was "Owls! owls!" all through the woods, winding up with a ringing cheer for Trent, and cries of "Go on! go on!" And they accepted his copper and silver coin for all gold until he closed the bank.

Multitudes are often more delicately poised than the Quaking Stone of Ireland, and more easily moved than the twelfth man on a jury, and a touch will set them swinging. An owl proved Theophilus's bird of victory, and Minerva's special fowl became his own.

Theophilus went home and shaved.

And when the multitudes rolled off the free and sometimes rollicking measures of the campaign songs, they certainly out-voiced the half-frozen Pilgrims of whose music Mrs. Hemans declares, —

> "And the stars heard, and the sea,
> And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
> To the anthem of the Free,"

and its effect was very grand.

The speaking and singing last full four hours, every hostile doctrine has been exploded, "the survival of the fittest" has been established, and the tangled mass of packed humanity is parted into long strands that speedily disappear with shout, song, Indian whoop, and abundant laughter about nothing. The squirrels come out of their holes and are picking up

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the crumbs, the birds that fled dismayed return to their haunts, even a fox steals into the oaken colonnade and forages for chicken-legs and fragments of boiled beef. It is the picnic of the juniors; the seniors of the animal kingdom have departed. Of the earnest speakers of that day, he of the eloquent tongue and witty eye, he of the heavy sledge, and the light-weight spark-arrester? One of them lies among the silver mountains of Colorado, and one beside the Hudson River; the one has a wordless requiem, the other an unlettered monument.

What a series of crops those scattered acres of oak opening have borne, — oaks, grain, men; and the noblest is the last. Newspapers did not fall like snowflakes in every door-yard. The people were reached, face to face, by living and impassioned voices, carrying with them all the power of their mesmeric sympathy that first found a name in a foreign city in 1776. The doubting were confirmed, the lukewarm roused, and seeds of opinions sown in younger minds germinated, blossomed, and ripened into action that has not yet ceased.

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CHAPTER XXV.

SORROWFUL TIDINGS. — HOW A SAILOR WENT ALOFT.

FOR a long time there had been no word from Uz, when a letter was brought Theophilus by private hand. In opening letters there are ways, and other ways. At that day letters wore no jackets, but were done up in themselves, much as on the Plains buffalo meat is baled up in the late wearer's own apparel.

One held the L. S. over the hot breath from a tea-kettle's nose and relieved the missive from the wafer's imprisonment; another produced a penknife — modern pens are more than a match for it — and carefully dissected out the seal; a third held it unopened for a while poised on his fingers, wondered who wrote it, what there was in it of good or evil, turning it over, possibly putting it to his ear in an absent way. Theophilus, after his manner, slipped a finger in somewhere beneath the sealed edge, husked it into a tatter or two as if it were an ear of corn, dived to the bottom of the sheet to see who wrote it, and then began the perusal.

The name he read was "Hezekiah Dodge, Pastor," and he knew him for the Elder that preached on that memorable Sunday; knew, too, that Death had gone aboard the "Ship Uz," as the Captain called his home.

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He thought over officers and crew, thought perhaps the little cabin-boy had been promoted; but he was not prepared for what he read: "Captain Job Hauser is dead and buried." It was like the blow of a heavy hammer, and the letter dropped from his hand unread. It seemed so improbable. Why, had he not known him from his own boyhood, did he not *find* him alive, — always a man grown? Theophilus had formed a habit of thinking that the Captain, at least, was a fixture. He had never counted him in with them who die. Had it been the cabin-boy, now, or even Mrs. Hauser, it would not have so shaken his faith in the stability of things. It was like one's experience of an earthquake, when he staggers under his first conviction that the solid globe itself is not a sure abiding-place. It is in some human natures to feel thus. They believe in some delusive exemption for their friends, especially those whom they found living, and have grown to think they must certainly leave alive.

He had read this paragraph somewhere not long before: "A met B, who said, 'C died to-day.' The reply surprised him into saying, 'Why, he was *alive* yesterday!'" Theophilus did not understand it then, but it was clear to him now, and he bowed his head on the table and tears fell fast. He did not make self-confession that those tears were not altogether for the Captain. He remembered an old wooden headboard bordered in black and lettered in black, "Weep not for me, but for yourselves weep!" but he

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did not know that even then the driving rains had washed all the words away but the first two, "Weep not—"

Theophilus picked up the letter and resumed its perusal: "Captain Job Hauser is dead and buried. The family knew you would be there if you heard, but Mrs. Hauser said you had your duties to the living, and there were enough of us to care for the dead. So you were not informed."

The letter was minute in detail, but I have carefully read the faded sheet found among Theophilus's papers, and give the substance of the remainder in my own words, adding such accounts of the closing scene as I subsequently received. Six weeks before, the Captain fell from a loft. No bones were broken, and no evidence of other injury, yet the shock affected his whole system. He complained of no pain, indeed he complained of nothing. He was like a watch dropped upon a stone floor; it intermits a few beats. Shake it, and it ticks a few times more, then stops again; just some slight displacement beyond the skill of any but a watchmaker. It was so here. He grew gradually weaker, until it was with difficulty he climbed to his lookout; but he went. His hearty tones were subdued a little, but he was cheery as ever.

One day he sent for two or three with whom he had had differences. They all came together and stood round the old man as he sat. "Old man" I write, but he had never seemed so until within a few

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days. Not that there were any new lines or wrinkles, but, if I got the minister's meaning, as if he saw from an elevation a splendor not seen by us in the valley below, whose solemn light fell on his face and hair, — solemn but not sad. The Captain old? I should almost as soon have thought that the painted picture of a youth should grow gray with wrinkled age.

"There is some talk, the doctor says, that I may slip the cable any day, and I wanted to have a clean bill, if so be the report is true. We have run athwart hawse a bit. There was somebody in the wrong, and from what I know of Job Hauser I think he is the man," and added, with the smile that makes a man's heart ache to see, "I don't need any Nathan to identify me. So give me your hands that everything 's taut, square, and ship-shape."

The men, overcome with emotion, vainly tried to stop him. He shook them by the hand one after another, and called after them, "When the time comes, help give me a lift over the side!"

"We will, we will!" they murmured, and went slowly away, saying nothing, but thinking all things kindly of the dying Captain.

The days crept lingeringly along; the steps of busy life upon the farm seemed to have begun the funeral march too soon, — ay, too soon for anybody but the sailor. Every day he unslung his ship's glass, donned his tarpaulin, and climbed to the lookout, at first twice, then only once. Towards the last, his wife or one of the children followed him, but he made no comment.

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"A dead calm is coming on," he said, "and little chance of sighting anything." They thought he wandered. The children watched him, their large eyes full of unshed tears. The wife looked that great sorrow which was never put in words. As for the cabin-boy, sturdy little fellow, he cared nothing for these things, but sat upon his father's knee and crowed like a poultry-yard of young bantams.

There came a day when he got as far as the first lookout stair and turned back. "Deborah, I'm a mite shaky on my pins. Just take the glass and go up yourself." She took it, and for the first time in twenty years broke utterly down. "Oh, Captain, Captain —" then checked herself. "Obey orders if you break owners," he gently said; and she went up in the loneliness and mourned like Rachel and would not be comforted. Controlling herself at last, she came down, making a report as playfully as she could, desperate as it was: "I sighted three black craft, Captain Job, at anchor in a tree. Pirates at sea, they are crows ashore!" and her laugh was a sob.

The Captain was bending over the model of the "Nautilus." "Deborah," he called out, "bring me the waxed silk thread — three ratlines gone; it's not easy going to the mast-head without the ladder, as a landlubber would have it. A lull's the right time to make all ready against the storm comes." He spoke up quickly one morning: "Wifey, I saw old Joey Pelton last night, — him that was my first mate for ten years and went overboard in a gale at last.

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He came up to me with the old Jack Tar back-action scrape. I saw him shift his quid from one cheek to the other as plain as I see your face this minute, and he *said* something, Wifey; this is what he said, loud and husky like, 'Cap'n, we've got the loadin' aboard, and all's ready to make sail;' and then he just flickered out like a candle burned down to the socket. It did n't look like a dream, for I wondered while he stood there whether it really was a dream. Can a man doubt a dream *in* a dream?" and he silently pondered.

Another day, his wife seated near him, he said, "I've a mind to put on my blue-water toggery again." Not trying to dissuade him, she went about assisting him with a misgiving heart. Completely arrayed, even to the sailor's knot at the throat, the two girls aiding him, he made his last climb to the lookout. It was a calm, clear day. "There is n't a cat's-paw of wind, but there 's quieter places than this. I guess I'll go below;" and the daughters guided his uncertain steps.

Half reclining in his old arm-chair, all the family gathered about him, — for it was mid-day, — he seemed to wander. His wife wiped away the dew-cold sweat that covered his forehead; he lay with his eyes half closed. Arousing with a start, he said: "Who hails? — Deborah, have the boys put the ship's old flag at half-mast when — There 's a gun! Ship in distress! Did you say go aloft?" He was a sailor before the mast again. "That was the cap'n's voice; where 's

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the first mate? Is he blown over-bo-ard? Aloft, you said — that gun! — I'm going — AYE, AYE, SIR!" and he went. The Captain was dead.

A befitting monument marks his resting-place in the country graveyard. An anchor is sculptured upon it above his name and title, and under them

"GONE ALOFT."

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CHAPTER XXVI.

"THE DAY WE CELEBRATE." — DIN, DINNER, AND DECLAMATION. — CANAAN IN A BLAZE.

POWDER and patriotism are a pair, and eagles and orators fly in couples. The season, formerly more than now, extended from the third to the fifth of July; the third to make ready, the Fourth to fire, and the fifth for the smoke to lift. There were precisely D's enough in the usual Independence programme to equip a pair of divines with becoming titles: Din, Declaration, Declamation, and Dinner. Sometimes there was a fifth D, not herein enumerated.

Western countries were apt to be noisy in the days this chronicle describes. They were not so far from "the War of '12" but some of the heroes held out to march in processions, sit upon platforms, blow fifes, beat drums, and drink a noggin of rum. Thrice glorified the community that had saved some man alive who knew "Old Put," smelled powder at Yorktown, and felt bullets at Trenton. True, some of them might have been a species of dry-land powder-monkeys, or atoms of twelve-year-old drummers; but no matter, they were there. Several towns had Washington's favorite body-servant at the same time,

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who smoked hams for a living, and smoked tobacco while living. Every such town displayed its damaged remnant of "the peculiar institution" on Independence days, gave him a drink and a dinner, but treated him with distinguished disrespect on all other days. Generally his principal name was Jonah.

Canaan was to celebrate. It had secured a cannon from Detroit, and *another* gun, to wit, an orator, from Bodkins; borrowed some flags from abroad; made one, a kind of pictorial henhouse with one fowl in it, cut out of blue broadcloth, perched upon a white ground, but always just ready to fly down,—a genuine Delaware, a Blue Hen's chicken, albeit a chicken with an aquiline bill. There was yet another flag, of domestic manufacture, which would be unfurled at the right moment. They had drums, fifes, and a bugle of their own. Some of the brightest victories had been achieved with no other accompaniment than drums, fifes, and gunpowder thunder. What would anybody have? It was good enough for Canaan or any other locality this side the Jordan.

To those who remember the young man's ovation at Canaan on a former occasion, it will be no surprise that Theophilus was the chosen "Orator of the Day." They had never forgotten him, never ceased to think of him as a young hero, if there ever was one, although his courage and that of the *Mephitis Americana* were slightly similar, both comparatively harmless, and, upon occasion, both pungent. Supposititious heroes are not extinct.

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The Canaanites had arranged for a public dinner in a bower, — the boys said "bowery," — a dining-hall walled and roofed with green branches interlaced. The building of the bower was an idyl. Great wagon-loads of green boughs came trembling into town the afternoon of the third, and boys and girls trooped across the fields with branches in their hands even as Birnam Wood came forth to Dunsinane. It suggested Palm Sunday with its throngs. They wrought on by moonlight, beguiling the labor with jest and laugh and bursts of song, "Independence let me share," "Hail Columbia, happy land," and "Yankee Doodle" by pucker, Yankee Doodle by word, and Yankee Doodle by frisky feet. By ten o'clock the bower was done, and half the boys in the village wanted to sleep in it.

The banquet was provided for by subscription, not of cash but comestibles, — not a bad idea, seeing that some of the money came dangerously near not being anything at all. Thus a glance at the big sheet of foolscap showed that A. Jenkins subscribed three roasted pigs; C. Williams, three more, — what a place for Charles Lamb, and what a paradise of crackling! — James Butler, six baked chickens; Jenkinson & Jones, sixty yards of red, white, and blue cloth for decorations, — *mem.* "to be taken back if not damaged;" J. Mosher, two boiled hams; Mrs. French, six pumpkin pies and a roast turkey; Day & Martin, four pounds of coffee, a box of lemons, and two cones of loaf sugar; L. Alford, a pound each of Young Hyson and Gunpowder. The lady who had charge of brewing

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"the cup that cheers" thought to test it the night before the Fourth, at home; so she opened a canister, took a little pinch, tasted and was astonished, threw another little pinch into the fire, jumped, screamed, and had a small Fourth of July on the third. It fell but one letter short of being a beverage, — it lacked the *T;* and the lady carried the irritable article out, shut it up in the outdoor oven, and sent word to the one artilleryman to take it away. Then the ladies subscribed in force, pies, puddings, election cake, seed cake, pound cake, varying the racket with nutcakes, cookies, and gingerbread.

The oration was to be given in the largest church, and the young people were decorating it with vines, flowers, and rosettes. The stars and stripes were looped up over the platform, and it was a pretty interior. Eleven o'clock struck before the young decorators left the building singing,

> "We won't go home till morning,
> Till daylight doth appear."

Everybody was tired out; but day broke very violently, unpleasantly early in the morning.

And Theophilus was quite as busy at Bodkins. He paced the empty schoolrooms and rehearsed his oration. He mounted Bunker, mentioned Bennington, alluded to Saratoga. He chinked in "heroes, martyrs, patriot fathers," even up to the Pilgrim variety, wherever he could see a place, and chucked "deathless," "immortal," and "liberty" into every crevice. He

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indulged in strophe, antistrophe, apostrophe, — calculated for everything but a catastrophe. He referred to religion, education, and the West, introducing Bishop Berkeley by proxy, as he could not be present himself, in the person of

"Westward the star of empire takes its way,"

and hung an elegant rhetorical flag over the whole. He was not satisfied, but then he was so difficult to satisfy. Perhaps his audience would prove more indulgent, and thus unwittingly made a bid for ignorance.

His sleep that night was perturbed. He dreamed. He thought he had risen to address the audience, but in spite of himself was compelled to begin at the end and speak backwards; all he could do he could not stop. He made Ethan Allen President of the United States, set Dr. Franklin dipping candles for the night attack on Ticonderoga; he wished somebody would put an end to him before he tumbled down from the pinnacle of a tall climax. Then the misery took a singular turn; the exordium seized the peroration in its mouth and rolled bodily like a hoop-snake out of reach, and he saw, as he stood looking after it, that it was red, white, and blue. Then the audience clapped their wings and began to crow, and he woke in a fright to find himself drenched with sweat, and to hear a rooster lustily crowing in a tree by his window and a curtain flapping noisily in the wind.

The morning sun was a ball of fire, as Independence suns should be. An application had been made to

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the orator that Mrs. Theophilus should pose as a goddess of something on the platform; but he objected to her associating with women of any such reputation as mythological goddesses usually enjoy, so the idea of a group of doubtful deities was relegated to the heathen.

Promptly at nine o'clock a span of piebald horses in four pairs of white stockings arrived from Canaan to convey the speaker to the field of glory. It was a conspicuous team; and Mrs. Theophilus said if only they could have had a span of zebras, there would be the stripes, and he being the star, it would be a badly disastered ten-footed flag of our country. Theophilus did not like it, but was wisely silent.

As they approached the village, drums and fifes, with the flourish of a bugle, were heard, and a Committee of Reception appeared. First came Colonel Barton, the grand marshal, girded with a red sash, wearing a sword at his side, and a feather in his hat like Yankee Doodle's "maccaroni." The Colonel had been in the peace service, and behaved manfully at what was known in local history as the battle of the watermelons. The drums and fifes were at his heels. Behind them, an ensign in the fringed green coat of a rifleman carried the national banner. Yet another color-bearer followed him, whose flag was folded closely around the staff and tied with a string. They halted, the Colonel saluted, and the line of march, not much longer than several polysyllables, was arranged thus: Grand marshal, band, ensign,

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bearer of the mysterious flag, the piebald team, Theophilus; while first, last, and all around were swarms of all sizes and both kinds of excited humanity. Then the Colonel, with military curtness, said, "Music! MARCH!" and the head fifer miserably blundered, and struck into the "Rogues' March," but instantly struck off with "The Campbells are Coming." Theophilus recognized the few notes of the squelched affair, and his face glowed with anything rather than patriotic ardor, but speedily faded out.

Meanwhile the man of the folded banner was making frantic efforts to untie the confining string with his teeth as he marched, succeeded in *biting* it off at last, and unfolded the banner. There was a fine, fresh breeze going, and Theophilus read with bulging eyes, and the look in them of something hunted to death, these two lines in black cloth letters stitched upon the white flag: —

"THEOPHILUS TRENT.
HAIL TO THE THIEF!"

Here he was, convicted at last of the wretched filching of that temperance address; and he turned chalky white. The Marshal saw the unfortunate legend, and cried, "Halt!" Everybody saw it, but nobody cried. When the offending welcome was lowered, it was found that the thread fastening the letter *C* had drawn in such a way as to break the back of the unfortunate character, so that the upper part lay horizontally across the top, and it looked more like

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a *T* than any other individual in Cadmus's collection except the genuine letter itself. One of the drummers, who was also a tailor, whipped out a needle and thread and speedily adjusted the distorted initial. The music and the march recommenced, and, absurd as it was, he felt he preferred to be hailed as a Chief than a Thief, though the *former* was a blunder.

The escort proceeded without further misadventure, and the church was reached. The village was a lively scene of joyful confusion. There were ripples and eddies of children, and whirlpools of a larger growth. Everything seemed to be astir but the things that were dead, and some of *them* were. Flags flew, ribbons also. Men and boys were buzzing about a barrel at the tail of a wagon like bees about a cider-mill; of cards of gingerbread there were enough to pave a door-yard walk. Girls were going about hand in hand, other girls were going about matched more in accordance with Nature. Lines of all sorts of vehicles and saddle-horses stood everywhere. The one-gun battery on the public square made now and then an emphatic speech of two syllables and a cadence, — the first from its own mouth, the second reflected from the wall of a big tavern barn, the last murmured back from the surrounding woods. Fire-crackers were exploding underfoot. Decanters were incessantly coming down from the shelves of the tavern bars, though there was not a breath of riotous or rude disorder.

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The stores were full of people; neighing horses calling their truant colts, whimpering children calling their missing mothers; friends long separated shaking hands; a couple of Frenchmen, who had not met for years, flying at and kissing each other with an unwarrantable waste of what Thackeray calls the osculatory ceremony, and with not a little roundabout laughter from less effusive spectators.

The cannon, of which most of the women were afraid, was trundled nearer the church, in furtherance of a little plot between the speaker and the Colonel, for a theatrical effect. The band stationed in front began to play. The church was already packed, and the crowds outside, about the open windows, indicated that the building had been filled to the window-sills, and then run over. The President of the Day, the Chaplain, the Reader of the Declaration, and the Orator, preceded by the Marshal, sword in hand, reached the platform with difficulty. The temperature was patriotically high, nearly up to par, and the church was full of fluttering fans, like the wings of unheard-of butterflies. The band played, the President called to order an audience already as whist as mice, the Chaplain addressed the Almighty as Ruler of nations, God of battles, and Prince of Peace. It was brief, and it was well. The Reader gave the Declaration with rare propriety and force; read as if his heart was in it; read as if he had written it himself.

Theophilus was introduced, and there was a little dry *click* in his throat. The oration began. It was

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graciously received and heartily applauded. Some said he reminded them of Daniel Webster, others thought it was more like Patrick Henry, though nobody had ever heard one or the other. Who ever knew a Fourth-of-July oration that did not sparkle and shine? They are about all as nearly alike as a flock of merinoes. The audiences are toned up, hot, uncomfortable, and easily satisfied. The sparkling bottled cider of the Fourth is "the flat, stale, and unprofitable" small beer of the fifth.

Theophilus's little plot was this: the Marshal to station himself on the sill of an open window where he could see speaker and gunner at a glance, Theophilus to signal him by exhibiting a handkerchief, the Marshal to repeat the signal to the watching gunner, and the gunner to fire. The last-mentioned official was heard whispering to a crony that he would give them "a *buster;*" and he did not lie.

The declamation against the saltpetre element in national celebrations had, even thus early, begun in some quarters, and Theophilus meant to summon a witness with a little more specific gravity than the spongy objectors who would have lightning without thunder, battle silent, and rejoicing dumb. He called John Adams to testify, who substantially charged, "Let the Day forever be ushered in with the thunder of artillery." Now, the instant the speaker was through with this witness, and at the utterance of the word "artillery" he drew out his handkerchief. That handkerchief proved to be a dicky that had blundered

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into his pocket, and its long white strings flirted like a tattered streamer. If anybody discovered the cut of the article, he had no time to think about it, for no sooner was the hair-trigger word out, than a deafening roar shook the building, glass jingled and fell, the drums rolled, women screamed, men jumped; but Theophilus knew what was coming, and stood immovable as a veteran. For an instant he thought the gunner had blown away the rest of his oration, that he was fairly "hoist with his own petard." Happily for him it was otherwise; and while the majority said it was very impressive, a few forcibly denounced it as an outrage to pack women and children and blow them out of a cannon's mouth. Theophilus proceeded triumphantly through to where Bishop Berkeley made the prophecy so gloriously fulfilled, although a few timid ones threw apprehensive glances at the windows, lest they should be cannonaded again. It may be added that thereafter the speaker abandoned the field-piece as a figure of rhetoric.

The President requested those in the church to remain while the occupants of the platform passed out, — why not? who ever saw the figure-head of a craft hanging on at the stern like a boy stealing a ride? — that then they should fall in by twos and proceed to the bower. So the crowd unwound like an immense ball of yarn, and followed the figure-heads to the bower. Within, the scene was one to reduce the genius of Famine to despair. Amid the heartiest of good feeling and good cheer the banquet proceeded;

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meanwhile liberal rations were distributed among the miscellaneous crowd outside; all ate, drank, and were satisfied. Theophilus sat next the President, who was also toast-master, and chanced to see upon the slip of paper a bit of toast, "The Orator of the Day;" The Orator of the Day stole out, Mrs. Theophilus following him. Those seated near, supposed he had gone out for a breath of fresh air and would return. He came not. While they were wondering, the piebalds were whirling home the pair, and no one suspected there had been an elopement. But it gave no offence, for all said he had done them good service without money and without price, and "if he does not choose to accept the personal challenge of a toast, he has a clear right to decline."

There are people yet alive in that region who declare it was one of the very pleasantest Fourths since first the day stepped three paces to the front along the lines of time.

Arrived home, Theophilus produced the dicky, called the cat, and tied it securely upon her back. There was a flash of white, and the wearer was out of the house and under the currant-bushes.

"I don't wonder," he said; "no more kit-cat linen for me. It is where it belongs now, — kit-cat to kit-cat. So ends this Fourth of July."

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CHAPTER XXVII.

MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY. — FEVER-AND-AGUE. — PROGRESS AND RESULT. — THE BODKINS HIGH SCHOOL CLOSES FOR GOOD AND ALL.

THE Michigan system of higher instruction was projected and devised at an early period in the history of Peninsula progress. It was large and liberal. The parent University was located at Ann Arbor, and branch universities were to be established at different points to prepare pupils for admission; in other words, they were to hatch the intellectual chickens for the more stately and matronly hen to brood. If, at the first glance, she may seem to have been a sort of *step*-mother, it may be quite truthfully added that in every hundred human mothers and step-mothers ninety-five of the latter in all faithfulness, patience, and loving care will not suffer, as the popular delusion is, in comparison with the former.

However this is, the University of Michigan has been the *Alma Mater* of thousands of filial spirits even to the second generation, who fill places of trust and honor in every department, — in Church and State, in arts and arms, in science and literature.

Theophilus was offered the principalship of the branch at Blue Wing, and the young man stood on

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the threshold of a cherished ambition. It was a march from Bodkins and a private school to Blue Wing and a State institution with real live regents.

But, alas, it was a dignity he was not to attain, for Winter and Summer had an altercation over him and both got him. If this climatic trouble is obscure, it will soon be clear. The Principal was returning from a neighboring village one sultry August day. He was crossing Spencer's Plains, one of the garden-spots of Christendom, horses panting like lizards, corn curling in the sun, heat dancing in the yellow road, robins with wings "trail-arms," Theophilus lifting his cap to nobody now and then, when he felt a cold, creeping shiver. He was startled, and glanced about him to see if things looked frost-bitten; but everything was piping hot about him — then another shiver. He looked at his hands; the veins, an hour ago full as rivers in the spring, were shrunken; they had a pale, vealy look; his nails were blue, and what a terrible tint it seemed to him! — not the color of violets and sky, but a dead-cold, dreadful blue.

That he was dying he had no doubt; of his growing cold before he died he was equally sure. He was in a Christian country, and he thanked God for that, — and no *hyenas*, and for that too. There would be somebody to lay him out. He thought of Mrs. Theophilus; wondered if she would reach there in time, wherever it was; wondered how sorry she would feel.

Yonder was a house. He spoke very kindly, almost penitently, to the horses, and felt like asking their

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forgiveness for any chance cuts he had given them, and he *knew* he should never do so any more. Each pony developed a second head! He was seeing double, as a sort of compensation against the near time when he could not see at all. The ponies walked up to the gate of their own accord, and he counted it an evil omen. A young woman was cutting garden sorrel.

He said shiveringly, "Lady, I am very ill," — his teeth chattering with fear and frost, — "and I think I am dying!"

"Mercy!" exclaimed the young woman, running to him like a lapwing, "what is the matter? Why! it 's Mr. Trent, is n't it? How do you feel?" He told her.

"Let me see your hands." She threw back her head and laughed. Dying as he was, he felt shocked at the seeming heartlessness of the lady. "Why, you 've got the AGUE, — fever-and-ague, that 's all! Come in and get right to bed. Mother will know what to do. She 's worn the ague *out*."

And this was a total stranger to him! He got to the house as he could, she piloting him a little by his elbow, direct to the kitchen where, hot as it was, there was a great fire; for, as the young lady said, they were "doing up" berries. What that meant Theophilus did not know; but he knew that *he* was "done up," and the fire looked good as he spread his cold hands to the blaze as if he were going to ask a blessing on it; but he grew chillier than ever. The bustling mother set a big handful of withered weeds steeping on the fire, whence rose an odor that suggested vigorous

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antiseptic treatment, he thought. It was not the least like incense.

"Come, Mr. Trent, and get to bed as quick as you can. I'll cover you up with winter blankets and give you hot boneset tea. Drink as much as ever you can."

He obeyed; but there was something so pathetically comical about the whole thing, that he smiled a wry smile, — it seemed so like the erratic performances of a harmless lunatic. Goes into a stranger's house at mid-day, out of a temperature of ninety degrees, sits before the kitchen fire and warms his hands, betakes himself incontinently to bed to be muffled with blankets and drenched with a dreadful slop, under the notion that he is freezing to death. Soon Lapland began to thaw; soon Africa began to burn. The fierce sun went down upon him lying there in a fever. Cold water and pennyroyal followed boneset. Blessed hands bathed his hot face. He talked at random. He was crazy at last. "I did n't mean to kill him — it was n't a deadly weapon — now play 'Money Musk' — See! SEE! a tree full of frozen lemons! — give me one, two, THREE — there 's the public square —" So he rambled on, and finally fell asleep; Lapland had melted, Africa had disappeared.

The morning found him limp and languid; his tongue tasted like a bit of woolly lamb-skin, and he had not the slightest desire to go or to stay. Nothing seemed to matter much. They loaded him with bundles of pennyroyal, thoroughwort, and elecampane,

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told him of several things that were "*good* for ague," and subsequent trials proved they were — *excellent* for ague, for it waxed stronger, shook him harder, and grilled him longer. Mrs. Theophilus saw him and cried; the doctor saw him and laughed, but said he meant to break it up.

Pills, powders, and messes were exhibited *secundem artem*. Every other day it returned. Well days, he felt like a wagon with a broken spring pulled out by the roadside and left, while vehicles of every fashion rattled merrily by. Ill days, he felt as if freezing himself in Greenland driving reindeer to Upernavik, and then bringing himself to by footing it across the deserts of the Dark Continent to Ujiji. Watermelons were "good for ague." Everything he wanted was prohibited, and most things he hated he was welcome to. He had ague-cake, but that he spleened against.

Finally, he turned into a clock that went backward. Beginning at noon, the ague appeared earlier and earlier. From giving him an off day's chance for his life, it became diurnal, and settled down to regular chronometer business. It retreated until it had marched the twenty-four hours, and then, about face, began to go forward as clocks should. The doctor said, "It's no use. These pills and potions keep your system out of order. It's got to be a tussle between Mr. Trent and fever-and-ague, and I propose to give you a fair chance, and with a little lift occasionally in the way of tonics, let you fight it out

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alone. I should n't advise it in many cases, but you have a sound constitution, and will win in the long run." And a long run it was. There spoke the wise and honorable physician!

Evenings, Theophilus sat at the door like a wooden image. He would not have objected to being set out in a flower-pot like a tulip. The world seemed to him a little the worse for wear. He was neither glad nor sorry. It was a fight in the dark. There was less of him to be shaken, and that was a comfort. The disease, disgusted with such obstinacy, gradually left him, — what there was to leave, — and he crept feebly back to his old life. It was worth something to feel the tides ebbing and flowing a little stronger day by day. It was like watching slow-pulsed winter quicken into signs and tokens of the spring; but another such victory would have routed him.

Friends and physicians urged him to go home, meaning New York; that had never borne any other name for him. It solemnized him as if it was "the long home" whither they commended him; but he reluctantly determined he would set his foot once more on his "native heath," in the hope he might feel as the Scot felt when he said with a quick accession of strength and independence, "And my name is McGregor."

For his sake the pupils had not deserted the ship. One clergyman heard the languages, another mathematics, the doctor had lisped instruction in philosophy, and the prominent member of the Board supervised.

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The school was about as multitudinously officered as the United States army at ebb-tide, — it takes a word with one more letter than a sonnet has lines to express it. Theophilus crept in at times, and sat in his accustomed chair, always greeted with kindly sympathy, and always regretted when he tottered out as one who might never return; but he did. Tribute flowers and fruits brightened his room, and cordial words lightened his heart. These were among the tonics the doctor did not prescribe.

Preparations had long been in progress for the old-fashioned Exhibition that should close the school year. The young ladies' essays had been written, revised, and neatly adorned with ribbons in red, white, and blue. The young men and boys had set the "tongues in trees" a-wagging as they rehearsed their pieces at dead of night in the surrounding woods, while "Rolla" was the one dramatic performance in which they were indulged. The barns and fields and forests had heard it, and they were ready. They petitioned for five plays, which would have kept an audience about as long as Jonah sojourned amidships, and made it quite as comfortable. Young students are strangely like Hamlet, — "the *play's* the thing!"

The final day came; the building was too strait for the throng. Theophilus, stronger but sadder, presided. The same singers and players who enlivened the wedding, re-enforced with an additional flute and a particularly flighty bugle, furnished the music. The

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girls, pale or flushed, trembling or elate, but all pleasant to look upon, read their compositions upon "Faith," "Hope," "Charity," some of Thomson's "Seasons," "The West," "Heads and Hearts; or, Heads I win, Hearts you lose." The young men declaimed from Campbell, Bryant, Whittier's "Prisoner for Debt," Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon." Edward Everett was remembered, likewise Halleck, thus extending their lease of fame yet another year. A mouse may free a lion, a school-boy help great names along towards immortality. The play concluded without the appearance of any star, but it was very pleasant. Did n't the mother of the editor of "The Bunkum Flagstaff" think her son a first-rate writer, and did not his aunt also certify?

It was generally known that this was Mr. Trent's last day of Principalship, and with his departure the Bodkins High School would cease to be and the pupils scatter abroad. One of the young ladies had prepared a brief farewell, and at the close of the announced exercises she appeared upon the platform, faced Theophilus, and began to read it at him. Snapping an empty pistol would have been pleasanter. She read about six lines and paused. The words, as if written with invisible ink, faded, and the page was blurred as with a little drop of rain. But she did not fly ingloriously. Rolling the manuscript into a scroll, she secured it with a black ribbon, and handed it to Theophilus, who sat like one receiving notice that the proper officer was duly authorized to hang him.

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"What did she mean by the black ribbon," he asked himself, — "that he was about to die, and this was a sort of funereal rehearsal?" Long after, he kept that faded scroll with a pistol in a drawer, as being properly classed with dangerous weapons. He forgot the waiting and silent audience for an instant, until he heard the doctor's watch tick, when he rose. He dreaded scenes; he shrank from the briny school of rhetoric, and he only said: —

"DEAR PUPILS AND HONORED FRIENDS, — From this day our relations are sundered. You part with a servant who has striven to be faithful, but you retain a friend who will always be grateful. If we have made the most of our opportunities, whether great or small, there is nothing to regret.

"Sometimes I think this is a large world, but I am glad to think that the extended hands of energy and enterprise, East and West, will soon touch and clasp each other; that we may not lapse into forgetfulness and neglect; that our hearts will yet warm one toward another as now in these days that will have been long dead.

"If there are fifty pupils before me, they may perhaps represent two thousand years of life and effort, of failure or success. Modestly estimated, there is great wealth of opportunities in store for this little school sometime, somewhere. To be prodigal of two thousand years of human life is to waste kingdoms. Let us take care of this heritage, for, once expended, like the blind Milton,

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'not to [us] returns
Day, or the sweet approach of even or morn.'

Two thousand years of right and earnest effort,— how much they might add to the grand total of human happiness!

"I have no faint farewell to leave you, but heartily as your friend, fraternally as your brother, I give you the dear old English good-by, unfolded like a flower,— God be with ye!"

The homely little orchestra played a parting tune,— a dirge for the old life and an overture for the new.

The next morning Theophilus made a pilgrimage to the High School building. It was an empty shell, and the birds had flown away. He picked up a little gilded arrow of trifling worth some one had dropped. The chapter of events that closed yesterday had been as the flight of an arrow in the air. Like that arrow they seemed to have left no trace; but like that arrow the result will be known only when the shaft has done flying, fallen helplessly to the earth, or quivered in some quarry worthy the strength of the bow.

By noon the small cottage was like a last year's nest, the trunks were strapped upon the carriage, even the "T. Trent" sad-colored box was not forgotten. "A cloud of witnesses" to their going bade Theophilus and his wife farewell, and with a last glance at the familiar surroundings, they rattled away by the road of the wedding journey, to catch the coach bound toward the rising sun. For them

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the curtain was rung down forever upon Bodkins and its people.

The day was shivering with an October chill, flurries of snow and withered leaves were keeping company, the trees stood about like tattered veterans of a long campaign when the colonel calls a halt. The pair remembered that *other* day of the royal progress, and were silent. Down comes the drop-curtain behind the travellers, and the lights are out.

A clerical friend has been looking over these manuscript pages for the Moral, and fails to find it. Let him console himself with the thought that he cannot find the Immoral. Let us rest content. A critical friend asks, "Where are those historical incidents and touches of character that challenge general interest?" and the answer is, "Nowhere, if not in the responsive sympathies of your own heart."

In common individual life not much of anything is worth mentioning. Single threads do not reveal the pattern of the tapestry, but, woven and united, the humblest fabric may display figures true to human nature and to life, that, amusing, may rob us of a care or two; that, appealing, may displace some thoughts of self with kindlier thoughts of others.

Of life and society in certain rural districts of a younger West, this book gives a few pictures that are truer than an old daguerreotype, because a little warmed and tinted by a loving memory. Among the

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best things we remember are those we "LEARNED BY HEART."

Bodkins has a new name; the locomotive has found the old village; church-bells ring all around the horizon; the sempstress is a *modiste*, the tailor is a draper; the graveyard is a cemetery, and the cemetery has many tenants; the memory of the High School has vanished like a river mist in the morning; the elders tell of those old days and the youngsters laugh. And yet, there were as much life, hope, variety, and content, as many of the best elements that compose the boisterous world, as lively a play of motives in that isolated hamlet as anywhere to-day on the electric-lighted stage of human action. In a word, that great part of speech, the Verb, was a household word even in Bodkins, — to Be, to Do, and to Suffer.

Theophilus Trent entered it a youth and left it yet a young man; but in later days he sometimes said that, considering the unachieved ambitions, the deplorable estrangements, the impaired self-reliance, and the unpleasant surprises incident to life, he was not quite sure his earliest and humblest aspirations were not his brightest and purest, when he would have been content to be laid in the Oak Openings, this fair white tablet at his head, —

THEOPHILUS TRENT, A. B.,
PRINCIPAL OF THE BODKINS HIGH SCHOOL.
ENTERED UPON THE LONG VACATION.
"THE SCHOOL IS DISMISSED."

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"And yet," he would add, "what matters it? Old Mortality is dead, but mosses and lichens are yet alive. That tablet would begin to lean like an Italic letter lost out of a marble alphabet, its inscription would grow illegible, youths returning from their squirrel-hunts on Saturday afternoons would make a target of the tablet, and emptying their fowling-pieces with a laugh, would say, 'Let us give the drowsy old duffer a volley.'"

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